

## **International Security**

- 401 U.S., U.K. Submit Resolution on U.N. Peacekeepers for Darfur**  
(Deteriorating situation calls for action, U.S. diplomat says) (680)
- 402 Preventing Attacks Central to Effective Counterterrorism Strategy**  
(U.S. attorney general outlines strategy against terrorists, post-9/11 reforms) (820)
- 403 Combat, Rebuilding Both Crucial in Afghanistan, NATO's Jones Says**  
(NATO's supreme allied commander briefs on current missions) (510)

## **Economics, Trade and Development**

- 404 Groups Delivering Foreign Assistance Shine Light on Corruption**  
(Admitting problems seen as honorable, not controversial) (870)
- 405 U.S. Remains Committed to Airline Deal with Europe, Officials Say**  
(More time needed to address concerns over rule change sought by European Union) (500)

## **Global Health, Science and the Environment**

- 406 Local Organizations Contribute to U.S. AIDS Relief**  
(Kenyan activists play vital role in prevention, treatment, destigmatization) (860)
- 407 U.S., European Researchers Explore Geologic History of Alps**  
(Mountains were far different 5 million years ago, reshaped by climate change) (400)

## **Europe and Eurasia**

- 408 Russian Suspension of Refugee Extradition to Uzbekistan Welcomed**  
(Senator Brownback, Representative Smith, OSCE Chair praise decision) (610)
- 409 Coercive Sterilization of Romani Women Examined at Hearing**  
(New report focuses on Czech Republic and Slovakia) (1100)

## **Africa**

- 410 U.S. Sports Star Returns to Congo To Open Hospital**  
(Basketball player Dikembe Mutombo teaches the game and improves health care) (800)

## **East Asia and the Pacific**

- 411 U.S. Trade Representative To Visit Singapore, Malaysia, China**  
(Schwab's agenda includes ASEAN ministerial, plans to revive WTO Doha Round) (860)

## **The Americas**

- 412 U.S. Arrests One of World's "Most Violent" Drug Lords**  
(Cooperation between U.S., Mexico led to drug kingpin's capture) (920)
- 413 U.S., Argentina Share Common Values on Democracy, Development**  
(State Department official says bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation excellent) (430)

## **Official Texts and Transcripts**

- 414 Transcript: Briefing by White House Press Secretary Tony Snow**  
(President's schedule, Iraq/violence, war on terror, Israel/Lebanon, budget deficit, North Korea/six-party talks, Lebanon/Hezbollah) (8390)

**415 Transcript: State Department Spokesman's Daily Briefing  
(Sean McCormack briefs reporters August 17) (6050)**

**Word Count Total: 23800  
NNNN**

\*WPD401 08/17/2006

U.S., U.K. Submit Resolution on U.N. Peacekeepers for Darfur  
(Deteriorating situation calls for action, U.S. diplomat says) (680)

By Judy Aita  
Washington File United Nations Correspondent

United Nations -- The United States and the United Kingdom introduced a draft U.N. Security Council resolution August 17 for the "expeditious deployment" of a U.N. peacekeeping force in Darfur.

After a private meeting with the Security Council to present the resolution, U.S. Ambassador Jackie Sanders said, "Hopefully, we'll get a resolution adopted quickly and unanimously."

"We hope the government of Sudan will do its part," said Sanders, the deputy U.S. envoy to the United Nations.

The African Union has informed the United Nations that it cannot continue to field its 7,000-troop mission in Darfur and has agreed that the United Nations should take over operations with a greatly enlarged, more robust peacekeeping mission in the area, where the security conditions continue to worsen. However, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has opposed any U.N. mission in the region.

Sanders said there are a number of high-level talks going on with Sudan, including discussions with the United States, and the United Kingdom is sending an envoy to speak to al-Bashir. "All the countries of the [Security] Council and any country that has any influence with this government is welcome and encouraged to use its influence to get the president" to agree to the peacekeeping mission, she added.

The ambassador said that, according to the draft resolution, the consent of Sudan is not required, but "practically speaking, it's going to be useful to have the government on board" to get the U.N. mission operational.

"It's becoming more violent on the ground, and the humanitarian situation is getting worse as well. So we really need to move this forward," Sanders said.

U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan told the Security Council earlier in August that there has been an upsurge in violence in recent weeks. Indiscriminate killings, rapes and abductions of civilians continue, he reported.

Calling July "a harrowing month" for relief workers, the secretary-general said that there were 36 attacks on aid operations and nine staff members were killed. As a result of the fighting and attacks on aid workers, only 50 percent of civilians affected by the fighting are getting help, he said.

Since its Security Council presidency in February, the United States has been pressing for the handover of the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) to the United Nations before the end of 2006.

In late June, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton noted that the U.N. target for taking over the peacekeeping operations in Darfur was January 2007, but Bolton said the United States believes "the handover can and should take place before that."

The United States is working to strengthen the existing AMIS mission, but Bolton said that "the sooner the U.N. takes control of the mission in Darfur the better." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=20060628113402eafas0.262829> ).)

The U.S.-U.K. draft resolution would authorize up to 17,300 military personnel, 3,300 civilian police personnel and 16 uniformed police units. Initial troop deployment would begin no later than October 1. It also asks the secretary-general to use existing and additional U.N. resources to strengthen AMIS prior to and during the transition, including using air and mobile ground units.

The U.N. mission would be deployed in key areas such as buffer zones and inside camps for displaced persons "to discourage violence, in particular by deterring use of force," the resolution said. It would "facilitate and coordinate, within its capabilities and in the areas of deployment, the voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons and humanitarian assistance ... by helping to establish the necessary security conditions in Darfur."

The mission also would monitor cross-border activities of armed groups along Sudan's borders with Chad and the Central African Republic.

The Security Council will begin reviewing the resolution August 18, but no date has been set for a vote.

For further information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html> ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\*WPD402 08/17/2006

Preventing Attacks Central to Effective Counterterrorism Strategy

(U.S. attorney general outlines strategy against terrorists, post-9/11 reforms) (820)

By David McKeeby

Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The disruption August 10 of a trans-Atlantic terrorist plot to blow up U.S. air carriers highlights the international community's progress in preventing attacks before they occur, says U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

"Prevention is the goal of all goals when it comes to terrorism, because we simply cannot and will not wait for these particular crimes to occur before taking action," Gonzales said in an August 16 speech to the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh.

As attorney general, Gonzales serves as the top U.S. law enforcement officer, providing legal advice to the president and overseeing the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The war on terrorism, the attorney general said, highlights the challenges of confronting an enemy who takes advantage of the laws and legal protections that allow open, free societies to operate. The need, therefore, of closely integrated international partnerships to detect and defeat terrorist activities against democracies is of vital importance, he said. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060810101148idybeekcm0.7115747> ).)

More than 200 FBI agents worked with their British counterparts in the lead-up to the arrest of more than two-dozen suspects since August 10 in the plot to detonate liquid explosive on board U.S.-bound airliners, and several U.S. agents remain actively engaged in the ongoing investigation.

"The level of cooperation between the United States and our foreign counterparts is outstanding and is truly the untold story of the war on terror," Gonzales said. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060812101719esnamfuak0.3155634> ).)

## PREVENTION STRATEGY BUILT ON FOUR PILLARS

The department's strategy of prevention, he said, is built on four pillars. The first is to conduct intensive, targeted national security investigations using every tool available under U.S. law to prevent terrorism.

Since the September 11, 2001, attacks on America, Gonzales said, the United States has utilized long-standing laws, like the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, to monitor suspected terrorists, and new laws, such as the Patriot Act, to increase coordination among U.S. national, state and local law enforcement and intelligence agencies, allowing them to share information more effectively and to stop terrorist attacks before they occur. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2005/Dec/02-750955.html> ).)

The FBI also has undertaken a massive reorganization to confront the terrorist threat, he said, establishing the Directorate of Intelligence, hiring more officers, and implementing new training programs to help its agents spot potential terrorist activities. Analysts, linguists and surveillance specialists are formed into special intelligence groups operating at all 56 FBI field offices across the United States. These groups are also networked into 103 joint terrorism task forces, which work with state and local police departments to watch for potential terrorists.

"Like tiny but important pieces of a complicated puzzle, we can now take the most innocuous, seemingly unrelated pieces of information and connect the dots of a complex terrorist plot," Gonzales said.

Because both domestic and foreign partnerships are essential to defeating terrorist networks, building cooperation is the second key component of the U.S. counterterrorism strategy. The London incident demonstrated the value of prosecuting attorneys coming together to train, exchange intelligence and share information, he said. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/May/05-682554.html> ).)

The third pillar, he said, is to arrest and prosecute terrorist suspects, which requires a complex balance between allowing investigators to gather sufficient evidence without allowing the suspect's to execute their planned attack.

While no two cases are the same, Gonzales emphasized that all investigations adhere strictly to U.S. civil liberties guarantees and the rule of law. "[W]e are fighting terrorists according to our constitution," he said.

The fourth pillar of the department's prevention strategy, the attorney general concluded, is an effort to counter radicalization.

While the international community significantly has weakened al-Qaida by destroying its training camps, freezing its assets and bringing its leaders to justice, the terrorists have turned to the Internet, where as many as 6,000 Web sites distribute propaganda and encourage individuals to join together to plan their own "homegrown" terrorist attacks. Others seeking to incite violence have infiltrated mosques, community centers and prisons to identify potential new recruits, Gonzales said.

The U.S. is working with its friends and allies to "develop the tools we need to investigate [terrorists'] actions and intentions with the help of our partners, and prosecute those who travel down the road of radicalization."

With the fifth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaching, the recent terror plot was "a chilling reminder of the threats that continue to exist," Gonzales said.

"[F]or those of us in government whose job it is to protect our country from terrorism, every day is September 12th." (See related e-Journal ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/itps/0806/ijpe/ijpe0806.htm> ).)

A transcript ( [http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/speeches/2006/ag\\_speech\\_060816.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/ag/speeches/2006/ag_speech_060816.html) ) of the attorney general's speech is available on the Department of Justice Web site.

For more information, see International Security ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/> ) and Response to Terrorism ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international\\_security/terrorism.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/international_security/terrorism.html) ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD403 08/17/2006

Combat, Rebuilding Both Crucial in Afghanistan, NATO's Jones Says  
(NATO's supreme allied commander briefs on current missions) (510)

By Vince Crawley  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- NATO troops in Afghanistan face a "test of wills" as they take over security throughout much of the country, says U.S. Marine Corps General James Jones, NATO's supreme allied commander in Europe.

Along with fighting a deadly mix of militants and narcotics traffickers, NATO troops also are placing high emphasis on reconstruction missions, Jones said during a Pentagon news conference August 17.

The focus on reconstruction will allow Afghanistan's people can see tangible results of the five-year-old international presence in their country, Jones said.

He said there are two rules he lives by: "Don't make any more enemies than you've already got, and don't do anything that's not good for the people." (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060725124550MVyelwarC0.3291284> ).)

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) took military control of southern Afghanistan on July 31 and plans to provide security for the entire country by the end of the year. Since July 31, 11 NATO soldiers have died in fighting and another 50 have been wounded, Jones said. In addition, there have been two non-battle deaths and 35 non-battle injuries, he said. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060729133900mvyelwarc0.7748072> ).)

"We are engaging with desperate elements," Jones said. These include "certainly the Taliban, but also ... violent narcotics cartels [and] criminal elements."

NATO commanders and reconstruction teams are encouraging Afghanistan's national government, led by President Hamid Karzai, "to take on ... some corruption issues in local governments" and to strengthen police forces, Jones said. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060807144403idybeekcm0.2772028> ).)

"This is a strategic moment in the southern part of Afghanistan," he said. "It's a test of wills. Certainly, the opposition is testing NATO to see if we do in fact have the will and credibility to stand and fight." And, he added, "evidence so far" shows "that the answer is overwhelmingly 'yes.'"

However, creating a stable Afghanistan will require more than just military successes, Jones said. Battlefield victories must be followed up by reconstruction missions. Otherwise, there will be few lasting results "if we just bring the military in and nothing follows it from the standpoint of reconstruction," he said.

Areas of emphasis include creating "a safe and secure environment, taking on the drug problems, taking on the crime, the corruption, taking on the efforts of al-Qaida and the Taliban," Jones said.

NATO is stressing that nonmilitary elements of the international community "simply have to be able to expand as quickly as we are" to counter instability, he said.

"There's no point in ... making the efforts that we're making in the southern region if it's not accompanied by some tangible evidence of change for the people," Jones said. "So this is ... a classic battle of hearts and minds."

Jones said he expects to retire from the U.S. military shortly after the NATO summit in Riga, Latvia, in November.

For more information on U.S. policy, see Western Europe ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe\\_eurasia/us\\_eu\\_relations.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/europe_eurasia/us_eu_relations.html) ) and Rebuilding Afghanistan ( [http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding\\_afghanistan.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan.html) ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\*WPD404 08/17/2006

Groups Delivering Foreign Assistance Shine Light on Corruption  
(Admitting problems seen as honorable, not controversial) (870)

By Elizabeth Kelleher  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Roads built to connect small villages that are supposed to be eight-feet wide are laid to measure only five feet. Medicines sent to the poor are diluted so some can be sold on a black market. A bribe is paid to get emergency supplies delivered. Transparency International -- an organization that publishes a "corruption perception index" -- calls such cases of fraud in humanitarian assistance "double disaster."

Stories of what can go wrong in the delivery of development aid to the poor and emergency assistance to disaster victims until recently have been hidden due to fears that donors will stop supporting charities, development banks and governments that deliver aid.

But recently, corruption is being aired ... and cleaned up. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060814142742SAikceinawz0.6359522> ).)

In March, Oxfam International, a charity that seeks to meet sanitation, water and food needs, found financial irregularities in its post-tsunami shelter operation in Aceh province, Indonesia. It used an outside auditor and recovered \$20,000 of \$22,000 paid for construction materials that had not been delivered. Oxfam since hired a loss-prevention officer to oversee its massive, \$97 million effort to help the Aceh victims of the tsunami.

In June, after investigating fraud in seven projects in Cambodia, the World Bank cancelled three of them, together worth \$7.6 million.

World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz said in a July 31 speech in Washington that his predecessor, James Wolfensohn, made the right move in 1996 when he set out to "fight the cancer of corruption."

Wolfowitz said now "donors and recipients put more emphasis on using aid effectively." The bank's investigation department has handled more than 2,000 cases of alleged theft, bid rigging, bribery, kickbacks, collusion and coercion since 2001. Those investigations have resulted in public sanctions on 330 companies or individuals, who have been barred from future bank-financed contracts.

Many on the list are small consulting firms, but larger companies have been caught and barred too -- including Tomen Corporation of Japan and Acres International, a Canadian energy company.

In early August, the bank launched a program to encourage those engaged in bribery in a World Bank project voluntarily to disclose the misconduct in order to gain confidentiality and avoid being barred.

In its upcoming annual meeting, to be held in Singapore in September, the bank will propose to involve local civil society groups, media, nongovernmental organizations and parliaments as partners in battles against corruption. The proposal is not finalized, according to Daniel Kaufmann, director of global governance at the World Bank Institute, but likely will bring about further progress.

The U.S. Agency for International Development proposes to spend up to \$750 million over the coming five years to eliminate corruption in societies or governments generally.

"The United States has been aggressive and is pushing other countries," said Alexandra Wrage, president of TRACE, a nonprofit association of multinational companies committed to resisting bribery in business. She said business has been ahead of international charities and nongovernmental organizations in rooting out bribery.

But because companies do play a role in humanitarian assistance, Wrage said, they can help nonprofits figure out how to move supplies without using bribery. She said that too often the attitude is "we're doing good, so the end justifies the means."

Indeed, one corruption expert for USAID said that aid workers sometimes see their situation in terms, "You have to pay off a warlord, or let people die."

But Wrage says such attitudes lead to hemorrhaging of food, medicine and money as they move through shipping and distribution. In the end, she said, "that hurts those who you want to help."

In June, a group of 11 nongovernmental organizations signed an "accountability charter" pledging ethical practices and sound financial controls. Jeremy Hobbs, executive director of Oxfam International, one of the signatories, said that the charter "outlines our responsibilities to the people we serve, the people who support us and the broader community."

Large donors to charities receive "stewardship reports" or are invited to visit projects. But charities are responding to demands from small donors, too, by using their Web sites. Donors to the Nyaka School for AIDS orphans in Uganda -- a project sponsored by GlobalGiving -- can see photos and learn about Nyaka students every few months; they get an e-mail when news is posted on the Web site.

Experts agree that the fight to end corruption in the delivery of aid and disaster assistance is waged most successfully when parties join forces. To that end, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption went into force in December 2005. The treaty makes it a crime for citizens of member countries to bribe officials of a foreign country.

Wrage sees the U.N. treaty as an important step. "There is a 'coming of age' of the international community," she said.

For more information, see also the U.S. initiative ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060810173046SAikceinawz0.1426355> ) to fight corruption globally.

The World Bank's list of debarred firms and people ( <http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?theSitePK=84266&contentMDK=64069844&menuPK=116730&pagePK=64148989&piPK=64148984> ) is on its Web site.

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, 2005 ( [http://www.transparency.org/policy\\_research/surveys\\_indices/cpi/2005](http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2005) ), and its report on corruption in humanitarian aid ( [http://www.transparency.org/news\\_room/in\\_focus/humanitarian\\_relief](http://www.transparency.org/news_room/in_focus/humanitarian_relief) ) are available on its Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\*WPD405 08/17/2006

U.S. Remains Committed to Airline Deal with Europe, Officials Say  
(More time needed to address concerns over rule change sought by European Union) (500)

By Andrzej Zwanecki  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The Bush administration remains committed to a deal with the European Union (EU) on liberalizing the trans-Atlantic aviation market despite a delay in rulemaking on foreign control of U.S. airlines, U.S. officials say.

State Department deputy spokesman Tom Casey said August 17 the administration is holding to pledges made by the two sides in June on concluding a U.S.-EU open skies agreement by the end of 2006.

A day earlier Jeff Shane, the under secretary of transportation, said the United States remains committed to changing airline investment regulation despite another delay. The EU considers the change critical to its final acceptance of the agreement.

According to the EU, Maria Cino, the acting U.S. transportation secretary, had told her EU counterpart, Jacques Barrot, that a final regulation giving foreign investors more operational authority over U.S. airlines is unlikely to be issued in time for EU transportation ministers to consider an open skies agreement at their meeting scheduled for October.

In November 2005, the two sides reached the tentative deal that would replace a complex structure of bilateral agreements with a simpler regime designed to allow airlines to fly between any U.S. and EU cities. It also would strengthen cooperation on safety, security and competition. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2005/Dec/09-356049.html> ).)

Since then, the U.S. Transportation Department has attempted to issue a new rule that would give foreign investors -- limited by law to 25 percent ownership share of U.S. airlines -- a greater say over operational matters such as schedules, routes and aircraft fleet composition. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2005&m=November&x=20051104130025ebyeessedo0.529339&t=xarchives/xarchitem.html> ).)

The rule would apply only to international investors from countries that have open-skies agreements with the United States and would continue to preclude foreign control over security, safety and defense issues related to airlines.

Despite these safeguards and approval from the Defense Department, members of Congress have criticized the proposed rule, complaining that foreign nationals' influence over U.S. airlines' managerial decisions could pose a risk to U.S. national security.

The Transportation Department revised its proposed rule and planned to issue it by the end of August. But even the modified version apparently failed to mollify congressional critics. In July, the House of Representatives approved an amendment to a spending bill that would block the rule change; a Senate appropriations committee backed a similar provision. If the full Senate passes it after the August recess the two versions of the bill must be reconciled and both chambers must approve a final bill before the president can sign it into law.

The State Department's Casey said the administration needs more time to address all the concerns raised by Congress.

The European Commission's transportation spokesman said the EU still hopes for the rule to come out in time for the open skies agreement to be approved by the end of 2006 and implemented in mid-2007.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN



\*WPD406 08/17/2006

Local Organizations Contribute to U.S. AIDS Relief  
(Kenyan activists play vital role in prevention, treatment, destigmatization) (860)

By Charlene Porter  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Steadily increasing the delivery of care and treatment to people with HIV/AIDS is a key objective of U.S. assistance to nations battling the epidemic, but building the involvement, talents and skills of grassroots organizations to sustain the long-term campaign against the disease is another goal.

“[A]t least one quarter of our resources go to capacity-building in the public and private health sectors -- physical infrastructure, training and support for work force,” said Global AIDS Coordinator (GAC) Dr. Mark Dybul in recent testimony before the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “And 80 percent of our partners are local organizations, which support more than 15,000 project sites for prevention, treatment and care.”

Audiences in Toronto and Washington met a few partners working on projects in Kenya via a digital videoconference August 8 arranged by the Office of the GAC.

Kenya is a target nation receiving special assistance under the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), which helps 120 nations worldwide. The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Kenya’s adult population stands at 6 percent, which represents about 1.2 million persons living with the virus and its consequences. The current national prevalence rate is a marked improvement from a high around 12 percent some years ago, according to a leading U.S. official working in Nairobi, Kenya, but some provinces still cope with extreme epidemics.

“[P]arts of Kenya -- particularly Nyanza Province on the shores of Lake Victoria -- prevalence rates exceeding 30 or even 40 percent are more like South Africa or Zambia,” said Warren “Buck” Buckingham, the country coordinator for PEPFAR, participating in the videoconference from Nairobi.

PEPFAR has enabled local people concerned about the epidemic to establish contacts, mobilize, organize and begin to help others, according to Buckingham. He introduced Elsa Ouko, the founder of KENEPOTE, the Kenya Network of [HIV] Positive Teachers, as one of those people.

Ouko said that HIV-positive teachers, as a group, were being stigmatized and discriminated against because of their disease, denied promotions and opportunities by administrators, who thought the teachers faced an early death. She recalled colleagues who were so weakened by AIDS that friends carried them in wheelbarrows to receive treatment when it became available through PEPFAR.

“The impact has been tremendous,” said Ouko, who described colleagues who have regained their health, are teaching again and even pursuing advanced degrees. “We are alive, and powerful, beautiful, very happy and a big fan to PEPFAR.”

## PREVENTION AT THE GRASS ROOTS

There is a broad consensus among AIDS experts that prevention of further infections is the best strategy to stop the epidemic from exploding in the future. The United States is supporting prevention with a variety of approaches in Kenya, including blood and injection safety, prevention of mother-to-child infection and of transmission through intravenous drug injections.

The 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, published by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) says that effective prevention programs are likely to reduce by half the number of new infections that will occur by 2015.

The report also finds that prevention programs in many nations are failing to reach young people who need information. One survey of 18 nations finds that fewer than 50 percent of young people have access to prevention services to reduce their vulnerability to HIV infection.

Alice Wambugu is involved with a Kenyan youth information campaign known as NimeChill.

"It's a simple slang word that Kenyan youth use," Wambugu explained to the videoconference audience. "Chilling is basically abstaining."

Nime Chill began as a mass media campaign, and is now working in 1,000 schools, Wambugu said, trying "to delay the sexual debut among urban and periurban youth by changing their social norms, reducing peer pressure and making abstinence look cool, smart and responsible."

HIV prevention messages are delivered to younger Kenyans by the Girl Guide Rangers. PEPFAR is supporting a \$200,000 program for training girl guides -- 14-18-years-old -- to be peer educators, encouraging youngsters to choose abstinence. Millicent Achieng, a Girl Guide Ranger, says the counseling encourages young girls to focus on schoolwork.

"I think when you delay the sexual debut until you get married, you're able to concentrate on one area and that is academics," said Achieng.

In Kenya and many other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, ensuring that girls are educated and have a path to opportunity is another strategy to help lift women from poverty, elevate their social position, reduce their subservience and thus protect them from HIV infection. More than 60 percent of persons living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya are women, according to the 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic compiled by the U.N. AIDS agency.

The amount the United States is investing in AIDS relief activities in Kenya climbed from \$34 million in 2003 to \$208 million this year, said Buckingham. Treatment programs have expanded to include 75,000 Kenyans.

"I'm a happy grandmother who was supposed to die three years ago," said Ouko, "but I'm living."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\*WPD407 08/17/2006

U.S., European Researchers Explore Geologic History of Alps

(Mountains were far different 5 million years ago, reshaped by climate change) (400)

Washington – Periods of dramatic climate change millions of years ago shaped the Alps as they stand today, according to collaborative findings from an Italian, Swiss and U.S. research team.

The mountain chain once extended 48-80 kilometers farther south into northern Italy than it does today, according to a paper published in the August edition of the journal *Geology*. The U.S. National Science Foundation funded the work.

The Alps were likely 100-200 kilometers wider and 300-1520 meters higher than they are today, before they were diminished by a massive erosion event 3 million years ago.

"At one time, what is now Milan [Italy] would have been in the foothills of the Alps," said Sean Willett, a University of Washington geologist. "But the Alps never regained the size they had at the end of the Miocene," a geologic era that extends roughly from 23 million to 5 million years before the present.

Willett is the lead author of the *Geology* paper, along with co-authors Fritz Schlunegger of the University of Bern in Switzerland and Vincenzo Picotti of the University of Bologna in Italy.

The planet was relatively warm and wet during the period under study. The Miocene also was marked by an event geologists call the Messinian salinity crisis, which occurred when the Mediterranean Sea had no outlet to the rest of the world's oceans.

Evaporation greatly reduced the level of the sea, and the beds of rivers flowing from the Alps dropped along with the rest of the Mediterranean basin.

Falling land levels caused serious erosion, the scientific team found, creating many of the distinctive deep valleys for which the Alps are known. The erosion also created a dozen major lakes that are distinctive features of the Alps today.

The research concludes that the Mediterranean substantially refilled with fresh water, probably with heavy rainfall, an indicator of climate change.

About 200,000 years later, the Atlantic Ocean finally breached Gibraltar and seawater poured back into the basin between what we now know as Southern Europe and Northern Africa.

After 3 million years of warm and wet conditions, the climate cooled again and glaciers formed in the Alps.

A press release ( <http://uwnews.washington.edu/ni/article.asp?articleID=26206> ) on the study is available on the University of Washington Web site.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD408 08/17/2006

Russian Suspension of Refugee Extradition to Uzbekistan Welcomed  
(Senator Brownback, Representative Smith, OSCE Chair praise decision) (610)

By Jeffrey Thomas  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The decision by Russian authorities to suspend the extradition to Uzbekistan of 13 Central Asian refugees has drawn praise from U.S. legislators and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Europe's largest human rights body.

The thirteen refugees -- 12 Uzbek nationals and one Kyrgyz national -- fled Uzbekistan after the violence in the city of Andijan in May 2005. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) granted them refugee status, but Uzbekistan has continued to seek their extradition, accusing the 13 of involvement in the Andijan violence. Russia has kept them in custody in the city of Ivanovo for more than a year.

According to news reports, the Russian prosecutor-general's office has posted a statement on its Web site saying that the extradition procedure has been suspended until the European Court of Human Rights renders a decision.

The co-chairs of the U.S. Helsinki Commission -- Senator Sam Brownback, Republican from Kansas, and Representative Christopher Smith, Republican from New Jersey -- welcomed the prosecutor-general's action. The two legislators recently urged both the Russian courts and the Office of the Prosecutor General to prevent the extradition of the 13 refugees.

"I welcome Russia's decision not to return these individuals to Uzbekistan, a country widely recognized for its egregious violations of basic rights," said Brownback in a statement released August 17 by the Helsinki Commission, which monitors compliance with international human rights commitments. "Perhaps this is a hopeful sign that Moscow takes its international obligations seriously and will lead by example in this and other cases involving human rights."

The most recent U.S. State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Uzbekistan said the Central Asian country's security services "routinely tortured, beat, and otherwise mistreated detainees to obtain confessions or incriminating information," and a 2003 report by the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture stated that the practice of torture in Uzbekistan is "systematic."

"The forcible return of refugees to Uzbekistan, an egregious human rights abuser, would be unacceptable," said Smith. "I hope the Russian government, currently chair of the Council of Europe, will stick by this decision to halt extradition and work with the U.N. to resettle these individuals."

"Under the nonrefoulement obligation of the U.N. Refugee Convention, to which Russia is a signatory, Contracting States must not forcibly return individuals to situations where their life and freedom would be threatened," the Helsinki Commission statement said. "Russia is also a signatory state to the 1984 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 3 of which prohibits the extradition of individuals to destinations where they are likely to be tortured."

The OSCE chairman-in-office, Belgian Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht, said he welcomed Russia's decision to suspend the extradition. He encouraged "the authorities to continue working with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to find a lasting solution for them."

De Gucht also praised Kazakhstan for its decision to hand over an Uzbek refugee to UNHCR for resettlement.

"I welcome Kazakhstan's close cooperation with UNHCR in resolving this case and encourage the Government to continue working closely with the UN to resolve all cases," he said August 16.

Independent international human rights groups, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the OSCE and the European Union expressed strong disapproval and concern after the Kyrgyz government announced August 9 that it was extraditing five Uzbek citizens to Uzbekistan. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060814162906xlrennef7.957101e-03> ).)

The Helsinki Commission statement ( [http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord\\_id=522&ContentRecordType=P&ContentType=P&CFID=22748137&CFTOKEN=22743841](http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=ContentRecords.ViewDetail&ContentRecord_id=522&ContentRecordType=P&ContentType=P&CFID=22748137&CFTOKEN=22743841) ) is available on the Commission's Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD409 08/17/2006

Coercive Sterilization of Romani Women Examined at Hearing  
(New report focuses on Czech Republic and Slovakia) (1100)

By Jeffrey Thomas  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Coercive sterilization of Romani women in the Czech Republic and Slovakia -- predominantly in the communist era, but with the most recent case reported in 2004 -- was the subject of a U.S. commission hearing August 15, as well as of a new report released the same day by the commission's staff.

The U.S. Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), also known as the Helsinki Commission, held the hearing with the aim of drawing attention to an issue that the post-communist world now is confronting but that a number of western European countries and the United States earlier also had to face.

Eugenics, a term coined by Frances Galton, a follower of Charles Darwin, was considered a valid science through the first half of the 20th century but since has been widely discredited. Its proponents, appealing to the science of the day for racist and social-class purposes, pushed governments to adopt policies and provide incentives to “improve” or “protect” human hereditary traits by intervening into human reproduction. Among other measures, some eugenicists urged forced sterilization of those they deemed genetically inferior.

Nazi racial policies were based in part on eugenics. While the Holocaust revealed the horror of coercive eugenics in its most extreme form, forced sterilization programs often continued well after World War II due to a combination of inertia, racism and a misguided sense of public health duty on the part of some medical practitioners, according to testimony at the hearing.

The CSCE report – “Accountability and Impunity: Investigations into Sterilization without Informed Consent in The Czech Republic and Slovakia” – contrasts the way the two Central European countries have dealt with one of the darkest legacies of the communist era.

The Czech public defender of rights investigated allegations of forced sterilization of Roma and found that it was a problem not only under the former communist regime prior to 1990 but also subsequently. Concluding that 100 percent of the alleged coercive sterilizations he investigated were illegal due to a lack of informed consent, the Czech public defender recommended in a report issued in December 2005 that the Czech government better anchor the principle of informed consent in its laws, ensure a change of culture in the Czech medical community with respect to the principle of informed consent and adopt a simplified procedure to compensate victims of its forced sterilization policy.

The Slovak government, on the other hand, resisted investigating cases of forced sterilizations and finally did so in a fashion the CSCE report criticizes as fundamentally flawed. The Slovak investigators were tasked with examining the narrow question of whether genocide had occurred and concluded it had not. Sterilizations not in compliance with Slovak law at the time were “dismissed as merely ‘procedural shortcomings,’” according to the CSCE, although the Slovak report did result in some positive changes in Slovak law.

Gwendolyn Albert, the director of the League of Human Rights in the Czech Republic (a private advocacy group), presented the commission with an overview of the history of coercive sterilization in the Czech Republic and a list of recommendations her group is urging the Czech government to implement.

In the Holocaust, 95 percent of the Czech Republic’s Romani minority was murdered. Today, Roma number 200,000–300,000 out of a total Czech population of about 10 million. The most recent coercive sterilization of which Albert’s group is aware took place in 2004.

In the communist period, doctors and social workers coerced Romani women into agreeing to sterilizations through financial incentives or threats to cut off welfare benefits or to take their children away, Albert said. In an unknown number of cases doctors also sterilized women who gave birth through Caesarean delivery.

The more recent cases “are primarily instances of doctors recommending Caesarian delivery of pregnant women and then exploiting that opportunity to sterilize them after delivery, or sterilizing them during abortions, surgery for ectopic pregnancies, or removal of intrauterine birth control,” she said.

While praising the Czech public defender’s December 2005 report as an “incredible advance,” Albert said ministerial members of the Czech Government Human Rights Council blocked a vote to adopt the report’s recommendations at a May 2006 session, “with the Health Ministry disavowing any state responsibility at all and even arguing speciously that the Czech Republic is not the successor state to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.”

Czechoslovakia’s communist regime was overthrown in 1989 in the so-called “Velvet Revolution.” The Czech Republic and Slovakia chose to become separate countries in 1993.

The Czech legal system has responded to charges of coercive sterilization by ordering a hospital to apologize to one victim and by dismissing five cases as not actually constituting violations of the law.

Other cases are pending, while those whose cases were dismissed are considering a complaint to the Czech Constitutional Court, Albert said.

Her group is urging the Czech government to apologize to the victims and to adopt the recommendations of the Czech public defender including legislative changes and the establishment of a compensation mechanism for victims.

Claude Cahn of the European Roma Rights Centre, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) based in Slovakia, submitted written testimony on coercive sterilization of Romani women in Slovakia.

"Where Czech officials have to date been delinquent in righting these wrongs, Slovak officials have deliberately and maliciously sought to thwart justice," Cahn charges.

Cahn also implied that, while coercive sterilization of Romani women was state policy in communist Czechoslovakia, the practice was continued after the fall of communism more through negligence than malignity. "After the fall of communism, Czechoslovak officials cancelled this policy, but not all doctors got the message," he says.

Cahn also said Germany, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland "all have histories of coercive sterilization of minorities and other groups."

Thirty-three states in the United States, too, endorsed forced sterilization policies at one time, and in recent years a number of governors have offered public apologies to victims. From the mid-1940s through 1963, some 65,000 Americans were sterilized as a result of such policies, according to a study funded by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Merck Co. Foundation.

Accountability and Impunity: Investigations Into Sterilization Without Informed Consent in the Czech Republic and Slovakia ( [http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Files.Download&FileStore\\_id=647](http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=Files.Download&FileStore_id=647) ) is available (PDF, 23 pages) on the CSCE Web site.

An unofficial transcript ( [http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=ContentRecords.ViewTranscript&ContentRecord\\_id=378&ContentRecordType=H,B&ContentRecordType=B&CFID=22744580&CFTOKEN=55773805](http://www.csce.gov/index.cfm?Fuseaction=ContentRecords.ViewTranscript&ContentRecord_id=378&ContentRecordType=H,B&ContentRecordType=B&CFID=22744580&CFTOKEN=55773805) ) of the hearing is available on the CSCE Web site.

For more information on eugenics and the Holocaust, see the Web site of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum ( <http://www.ushmm.org/> ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\*WPD410 08/17/2006

U.S. Sports Star Returns to Congo To Open Hospital

(Basketball player Dikembe Mutombo teaches the game and improves health care) (800)

By Judy Aita

Washington File Staff Writer

New York -- American basketball star Dikembe Mutombo is returning to his hometown of Kinshasa in September to open the Democratic Republic of Congo's first new hospital in more than 40 years, a hospital he helped build.

In 1997, Mutombo decided to use his celebrity, wealth and energy to improve the health conditions in his homeland. The 300-bed Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital and Research Center, named in honor of his late mother, will open on September 2.

The hospital is the result of the athlete's tireless efforts to raise \$29 million and set out a vision for a facility that not only will provide desperately needed health care, but also will have a special pediatric wing, surgery suites and a women's center, and train a new generation of doctors for the Congo.

"We are happy such a big step has been taken on the continent. I cannot wait until I get off the plane in Kinshasa and get the opportunity to cut the ribbon for opening the new hospital," Mutombo said at a press conference August 16 in New York. "Whatever I accomplish, wherever I go, my heart remains there."

The basketball star, who originally went to the United States to study at Georgetown University to become a doctor, has donated more than \$15 million to the project, while private donations from other celebrities, average Americans and corporate partnerships have helped offset the cost of construction, equipment and supplies. He also raised half of the money needed to run the hospital for a year and hopes to raise enough to keep it running for the first five years.

Mutombo will be joined on his trip to Africa by other basketball players from the National Basketball Association (NBA). They not only will open the hospital but also will continue a tradition, started in 2001, of conducting sports clinics for boys and girls around the world as part of the NBA's "Basketball Without Borders" program.

Kathleen Behrens, senior vice president of community and player programs for the NBA, said the program "allows us to not only grow and celebrate the game of basketball around the world but also to use the power and celebrity of our game and of our players to deliver important, lifesaving messages to kids about the importance of education, the importance of living an active, healthy and safe lifestyle."

Basketball Without Borders will be conducting sports clinics in South Africa and Botswana from September 6 to September 10. Other 2006 programs were held in Shanghai, China, in June and in Vilnius, Lithuania, in July.

The clinics, Behrens said, provide an opportunity for young people to discover how success in sports can be transformed into the development of life skills, with emphasis on the value of teamwork, respect and leadership.

The program also creates "lasting legacy projects -- reading and learning centers for kids, dorms where kids can live safely and protected from the dangers they face on the street," she said.

Behrens hailed Mutombo as a "great humanitarian for the NBA and the world," adding that he is "personally inspiring for everyone in the United States and hopefully the entire continent of Africa."

The hospital and Mutombo's participation in the Basketball Without Borders program are "not just about the Congo. This is really about Africa at large and ensuring the future health and well-being of the people of Africa," she said.

NBA players, the players' union and the league itself contributed money for the hospital "because they care," Mutombo said.

Fund raising was "slow at the beginning for the fact that Congo was still undergoing civil unrest and it was tough to raise money," he said. "As we see peace coming in the Congo, that made the things go more smoothly."

Americans are so generous, Mutombo said. "They believe in giving you \$10 or \$20 that will treat a child, that will give a woman a chance to deliver her baby in a hospital instead of delivering at home," he explained.

Mutombo added that many doctors from the United States and Europe are interested in working at the hospital for short periods -- a week or two or a month. He also wants to lure Congolese doctors who are working elsewhere into returning home.

"Scores of Congolese die each day unnecessarily due to the lack of access to health care and modern medicine," Mutombo said. "This hospital will be equipped with cutting-edge technology, and will go a long way toward diminishing the shortage of doctors and medical experts in Congo."

For further information, see the Dikembe Mutombo Foundation Web site ( <http://www.dmf.org/> ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\*WPD411 08/17/2006

U.S. Trade Representative To Visit Singapore, Malaysia, China  
(Schwab's agenda includes ASEAN ministerial, plans to revive WTO Doha Round) (860)

Washington -- United States Trade Representative (USTR) Susan Schwab will visit three countries in Asia August 22-29, her office announced August 16.

Schwab will stop in Singapore on August 22-23, and then will attend the 38th Economic Ministers' Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, August 23-26. She will travel on to China August 27-29, her first visit to that country while serving in her current position.

While in Singapore, Schwab will meet with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to discuss results of the bilateral U.S.-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which took effect in 2004, and to talk about regional economic and trade issues.

"ASEAN is one of the most rapidly growing and dynamic regions in the world and a commercially and strategically significant U.S. partner," Schwab said in a news release. "We view intensifying relations with Southeast Asia as a top priority."

The 10 member countries of ASEAN are Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

During the ASEAN meeting, Schwab plans to discuss with ministers from the ASEAN countries and other participants, including Australia, New Zealand, India, Korea and Japan, ways to revive the stalled Doha Round of negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=July&x=20060727151549SAikceinawz1.197451e-02> ).)

The United States "remains committed to achieving an ambitious market-opening outcome" to the multilateral trade talks to encourage global economic growth, the USTR's office said.

In Kuala Lumpur, Schwab also will meet with Malaysian officials and involved parties to discuss negotiations on the bilateral United States-Malaysia FTA. The two sides have already concluded two rounds of negotiations, making solid progress toward their goal of reaching a mutually beneficial agreement by the end of the year, according to the USTR's office. A third round of negotiations is scheduled to open in Malaysia during the week of September 18. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=March&x=20060308142719ebyessedo0.1158716> ).)

On her debut visit to China as trade representative, Schwab is scheduled to meet with Chinese Commerce Minister Bo Xilai to discuss China's role in helping to restart the WTO Doha Round negotiations and to urge more progress by China on issues related to its WTO accession commitments, such as strengthening enforcement of intellectual property rights and increasing access for American goods and services.

COMPLEX RELATIONS IN AN IMPORTANT REGION



Trade between the United States and the ASEAN member countries has grown substantially over the past decade. Collectively, the ASEAN countries are now the fourth largest trading partner of the United States, with two-way trade totaling about \$150 billion in 2005.

In 2002, President Bush announced the Enterprise for ASEAN Initiative (EAI) with the intent of further strengthening U.S. trade and investment ties to ASEAN, both regionally and bilaterally. The EAI offers the possibility of free trade agreement (FTA) negotiations to ASEAN members that are committed to economic reform and openness, and have negotiated a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with the United States.

The United States concluded its FTA with Singapore in 2003 and currently is negotiating a bilateral FTA with Thailand as well as Malaysia. It recently concluded a TIFA with Cambodia and a bilateral market access agreement with Vietnam as part of that country's bid to join the WTO. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060801130001ebyessedo0.6888849> ).)

The United States has active trade and investment dialogues with Indonesia, the Philippines and Brunei and is working with Laos to support its WTO accession.

Since the U.S.-Singapore FTA came into force in 2004, trade between the two countries has increased by 12.6 percent to nearly \$36 billion in 2005 -- making Singapore the 16th largest goods trading partner of the United States. At the same time, U.S. foreign direct investment in Singapore rose to \$56.9 billion in 2004, a 13 percent increase from 2003.

Recently, the United States has taken a number of steps to guarantee a more balanced trade relationship with China.

In February, USTR unveiled a top-to-bottom review of U.S. trade policy toward China. This review called on China to implement more fully its WTO accession commitments and announced measures the United States will employ to better monitor and enforce China's compliance with international obligations. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2006/Feb/14-712766.html> ).)

The United States consistently has promoted increased dialogue with China on bilateral trade issues.

In April, during meetings of the U.S.-China Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade (JCCT), a government-to-government consultative mechanism that provides a forum for resolution of trade issues and promotion of bilateral commercial opportunities, China promised to address U.S. trade concerns in three areas: enhancing market access for U.S. companies, farmers and ranchers; improving protection of intellectual property rights; and increasing transparency of trade regulation. (See related article ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2006/Apr/14-415253.html> ).)

The text ( [http://www.ustr.gov/Document\\_Library/Press\\_Releases/2006/August/US\\_Trade\\_Representative\\_Susan\\_C\\_Schwab\\_to\\_visit\\_Singapore\\_Attend\\_ASEAN\\_Meeting\\_in\\_Kuala\\_Lumpur,\\_Malaysia.html](http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Press_Releases/2006/August/US_Trade_Representative_Susan_C_Schwab_to_visit_Singapore_Attend_ASEAN_Meeting_in_Kuala_Lumpur,_Malaysia.html) ) of the USTR press release announcing Schwab's travel plans can be found at the Web site of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative.

For more on U.S. policy, see Trade and Economics ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/> ) and East Asia and the Pacific ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/> ).

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD412 08/17/2006

U.S. Arrests One of World's "Most Violent" Drug Lords  
(Cooperation between U.S., Mexico led to drug kingpin's capture) (920)

By Eric Green  
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- U.S. law enforcement authorities say they have arrested Francisco Javier Arellano Felix, whom they call one of the world's "most violent drug criminals" and one of its "most wanted fugitives."

At an August 16 news conference in Washington, U.S. officials said Arellano Felix headed the "largest and most violent drug-trafficking organizations" operating in Mexico's Tijuana-Baja California area. U.S. authorities captured him on August 14 as a result of what the U.S. officials said was "extraordinary coordination and cooperation between the governments of Mexico and the United States."

Paul McNulty, the U.S. Justice Department's deputy attorney general, said Arellano Felix and 10 other individuals, representing the top hierarchy of the drug organization, were named in an indictment unsealed July 8 in the southern district of California, which includes the city of San Diego. The charges against the Arellano Felix organization include allegations that it carried out 20 murders in the United States and Mexico.

McNulty said the defendants were also charged with racketeering, conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine and marijuana, and for conspiracy to commit money laundering. The indictment could result in penalties up to life in prison and possible forfeiture of almost \$300 million.

The indictment also alleges that the leadership of the Arellano Felix organization negotiated directly with Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations, including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), for the purchase of multi-ton shipments of cocaine, and received those shipments by sea and air in Mexico, and then arranged for smuggling of the drug into the United States. The U.S. State Department has designated the FARC as a foreign terrorist organization.

Michael Braun from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) said his agency arrests "a lot of high-level drug traffickers. That's nothing new." But Braun, the DEA's assistant administrator for operations, said Arellano Felix was "one of the 45 most notorious, most wanted drug traffickers in the world. So this is not your average arrest, and [Arellano Felix] is not your average drug trafficker."

Braun said that by capturing Arellano Felix, U.S. authorities "feel like we've taken the head off the snake. That's not to say that there may not be one or more members within the [drug] organization that are capable of stepping up and taking over and running operations. That's yet to be seen." But Braun said U.S. and Mexican authorities are working hard "to do as much damage as we possibly can against" the drug organization.

Braun said the arrests of Arellano Felix and the members of his organization, "combined with a number of the other efforts that have preceded it, will have a noticeable impact, not just on Mexico, but also in the United States, in terms of the ability to bring drugs into the country and the violence that has occurred" on the U.S. side of the border with Mexico. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=August&x=20060816143602AEneerG0.5255701> ).)

U.S. authorities said they were able to capture Arellano Felix after they received information August 14 that he and other associates were expected to use a fishing vessel about 15 nautical miles off the shore of La Paz, Mexico. Acting on this lead, the DEA requested that the U.S. Coast Guard interdict the vessel.

Following the interdiction of the vessel in international waters, the U.S. Coast Guard boarded the boat, and eight adults and three juveniles were discovered onboard and detained. One of the individuals aboard the vessel, who was traveling under an alias, later identified himself as Arellano Felix. U.S. authorities said Arellano Felix will be arraigned "in the very near future." An arraignment involves bringing an individual before a court to answer to an indictment.

The Justice Department's McNulty said he wanted to especially thank Mexican Attorney General Daniel Cabeza de Vaca "for his leadership and partnership" in the effort to capture and arraign Arellano Felix.

"It takes team work like this in order to accomplish such a significant arrest," McNulty said.

DEA Administrator Karen Tandy said in a separate statement released by her agency that Arellano Felix, the "last stronghold at the top" of the drug cartel, is a "violent drug kingpin wanted in the United States for numerous drug trafficking, conspiracy, and money laundering charges. He is considered threatening enough to our nation to warrant a 5 million dollar State Department reward for his capture. His arrest topples a dynasty built on violence and drugs and puts a chokehold on the destruction this brutal organization has caused in both the United States and Mexico."

The capture of Arellano Felix is another example of what U.S. officials say is the Mexican government's "forceful actions" to put drug criminals behind bars.

Anne Patterson, the State Department's assistant secretary for international narcotics and law enforcement affairs, said in March 30 U.S. congressional testimony that in 2005 "Mexican forces took forceful action against a number" of drug cartels and that "most of the leadership of the Arellano Felix Organization, for example, is now behind bars."

In 2005, the Mexican government extradited 41 fugitives to the United States, including a number of Mexican nationals, said Patterson in her remarks to the House International Relations Subcommittee on the Western Hemisphere.

Patterson's remarks ( <http://www.state.gov/p/inl/rls/rm/64104.htm> ) are available on the State Department Web site.

For more on U.S. policy, see Mexico ( <http://usinfo.state.gov/wh> ).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD413 08/17/2006

U.S., Argentina Share Common Values on Democracy, Development  
(State Department official says bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation excellent) (430)

Washington -- The United States and Argentina enjoy a positive relationship marked by shared values, strong communication and excellent cooperation, according to U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Tom Shannon.

In an August 16 videoconference with Argentine reporters, Shannon shared his assessment of U.S.-Argentine relations.

"From my point of view, our bilateral relationship with Argentina continues to be very fruitful, very fluid, with excellent communication," he said. "We have had an excellent level of cooperation, especially on anti-terrorism issues."

Shannon indicated that it is the United States' hope that this cooperation continues and improves.

"I believe that in the weeks, months and years ahead, there is a great opportunity to deepen our cooperation," he said.

Shannon said that the United States and Argentina share a series of common interests and values that stabilize the bilateral relationship and ensure that it continues to be a positive one.

"I believe that the United States and Argentina share not only political values, but also a perspective of the region with regards to the importance not only of the consolidation of democracy, but also enhancing the link between democracy and development to ensure that economic development in the region is democratic, equitable development," he said.

Apart from U.S. bilateral relations with Argentina, Shannon also commented on Venezuela's entrance into MERCOSUR or South American Common Market.

"At the end of the day, the issues of MERCOSUR are issues of MERCOSUR," he said. "If the nations of MERCOSUR believe that there is a benefit to including Venezuela within MERCOSUR, they are going to do it and we are going to respect this."

The State Department official added that whereas Venezuela is now politically a member of MERCOSUR, it is also economically integrated with the United States. Shannon said the United States is Venezuela's largest trading partner and pointed out that approximately 80 percent of its petroleum sector's income comes from the United States.

This economic relationship, including the presence of Venezuelan oil refineries in the United States, he said, undercuts Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's continued railing against economic cooperation with the United States.

"The business between the United States and Venezuela is increasing or going up over time," Shannon said. "This demonstrates, from our point of view, an inconsistency in the rhetoric of President Chavez because, effectively, Venezuela is economically integrated with the United States in terms of trade, but more than that it is integrated industrially."

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD414 08/17/2006

Transcript: Briefing by White House Press Secretary Tony Snow  
(President's schedule, Iraq/violence, war on terror, Israel/Lebanon, budget deficit, North Korea/six-party talks, Lebanon/Hezbollah) (8390)

(begin transcript)

THE WHITE HOUSE  
Office of the Press Secretary  
August 17, 2006

PRESS BRIEFING BY TONY SNOW

White House Conference Center Briefing Room

10:52 A.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: A number of things to start out. First, today, the President has been meeting and continues to meet with the Secretary of Defense, military commanders and senior advisors. This is a follow on to a recommendation made in July by the Secretary of Defense that the President have regular 90-minute discussions with military commanders for a comprehensive review of the security situation in Iraq, and also generally in the war on terror. So that is what is taking place right now.

Later in the day the President departs to Camp David aboard Marine One. There will be meetings with the President's economic team tonight and tomorrow. The economic team will include the Vice President, the Treasury Secretary, the Commerce Secretary, the Labor Secretary, the Secretary of HHS, the OMB Director, the White House Chief and Deputy Chief of Staff, Al Hubbard, David Addington, yours truly, Candi Wolff, Eddie Lazear and Keith Hennessey, also in attendance.

All right, let's see, a couple of other stories that I'd like just to touch on, because I know they're top of news, and then we'll go to questions. First, a couple of things I think that are important to -- by the way, if we can sort of keep it down in the back. That's been a distraction the last couple of days, and I'd like to try to make sure that we can all keep our concentration up.

There were reports that an unnamed military expert had received briefings at the White House that we are continuing alternatives other than democracy in Iraq. It's just not true. The article does note, however, that there has been increased violence in Iraq in recent months, and that is absolutely true.

I'm sorry, guys, if we can hold it down, it is distracting. This is not as big as the room used to be. Thank you.

We had testimony from General Abizaid last month; ones of the things he noticed is, I think he said the sectarian violence had been worse than he'd ever seen it, and that if trends continued, it could place Iraq on a path towards civil war. And the peace in The Times I thinks reflects some of the thinking that went into that. On the other hand, there are developments also subsequent to the third of August, I think, which was the named date of a memo that had been obtained.

A couple of things are probably worth noting. Number one, there is coalition presence throughout the country, but also the training up of Iraqi forces, which have become increasingly nimble and capable. I mentioned yesterday there had been outbreaks of violence that have been handled solely by Iraqi forces in three different parts of the nation, including Najaf and Basra, within the last week or so.

Iraqi Arabs also, as I stressed, retain a strong sense of nationhood, and many people in Iraq still remember a time when sectarianism was not, in fact, a guiding feature or a significant feature of Iraqi life. No major political figure in Iraq has described the situation as a civil war or advocated one, and as a matter of fact, the Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and other Shia leaders, in fact, have played a very prominent and welcomed role in trying to restrain Shia response to some of the sectarian violence.

The administration continues, though, to take a very close and candid look at what's going on. The security situation in some places is uneven, and it's clear that there are huge challenges that await us. The military commanders have been trying to reshape and retool operations, especially in the Baghdad area, and they've yielded some fruit.

I mentioned yesterday the previously violent Dura neighborhood. Let me just give you some of the stats I've received -- and these are about a week old now, but they give you a sense of what's going on -- more than 5,000 U.S. and Iraqi forces were involved in an operation that took violence down by more than 80 percent in Dura. Since the operations began the number of murders dropped to zero. It's the same neighborhood where there were, in some cases, 20 murders a day.

They cleared more than 3,000 buildings; they arrested 22 detainees; they seized weapons. There was an AP story that came out yesterday, I think you probably saw, that talked about Amariyah and a five-day sweep that had similar results. I don't want to be claiming that violence no longer is a fact of life in Iraq because it is. But on the other hand, there are continued efforts to try to be effective throughout the region.

Some other things as you look at stories ahead to think about: As coalition forces, as U.S. and Iraqi forces become more effective in neighborhoods in Baghdad, you can expect some members of al Qaeda in Iraq and also insurgent groups to filter elsewhere, and especially to test out the fitness of Iraqi forces. This will sort of parallel what we saw in Afghanistan, when you saw a transition of forces from U.S. to other forces. So that is likely to happen. We anticipate that.

Second story -- and this is also important -- actually, a couple of stories about what's going on in Lebanon. I thought I'd give you a quick update there. There were reports that senior members of the Lebanese government had said that Lebanon would not disarm Hezbollah. I mentioned yesterday to you the fact that Prime Minister Siniora would be giving an address to the nation. Well, he has delivered that address, he did it last night, and I thought I'd read out some of the key points, because it's counter of the stories that the Lebanese government says it won't disarm Hezbollah.

First, the Prime Minister reiterated that "a strong and democratic state is the biggest victory we as Lebanese can achieve." He also said that Lebanon will never be made into, "an arena for regional and international conflicts." He reiterated his nation's government -- his government to extending and implementing the Taif Accord, his own seven-point plan, and U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, and

also the other U.N. Security Council resolutions that well, as he put it, would extend state sovereignty, "over the entire homeland." He said that, "No areas will remain closed to the army," and that's important, because I think part of the reporting was indicating that Lebanese officials had said that they would sort of wink and nod and pay no attention to what Hezbollah had done. And he said there would be, "no armed manifestations outside state authorities." "Weapons should be held only by the state." Again, this is the Prime Minister speaking to the Lebanese populace.

In terms of the U.N. Security Council resolution, 1701 does not directly call for disarmament, but it does refer back to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1559 that does. However, there may be a follow on resolution, there has been discussion, if necessary, of coming up with more specific plans, either by resolution or joint planning, to demilitarize the southern part of the nation, that is demilitarize other than duly constituted authorities. And as I said yesterday, Lebanon will have to take the lead role, and we'll get some assistance from the United Nations forces, but Lebanon will have to do it.

We also understand that the Lebanese government, which has not had a significant presence in the south for 30 years, is going to have to take time to reestablish links and bonds with the Lebanese people. But again, the ultimate goal of the process is Lebanon, under the authority of a sovereign and elected government. Those are just a couple of the basic stories I wanted to make sure that I gave you sort of a readout on. I know there are others, and we'll take questions now.

Terry.

QUESTION: Do you think that Lebanon is fulfilling the U.N. resolution or is even making a good faith effort to fulfill the U.N. resolution?

MR. SNOW: Beginning to, yes. When you're talking about taking 15,000 Lebanese armed forces, troops and moving them into the south, that is something that's called for. It has been agreed upon by the government. But again, we're not expecting overnight results. We understand that this is something that is going to take time. But it is important to realize that there has been a commitment on the part of the Lebanese government eventually to regain control over the entire countryside. And that does include disarming Hezbollah.

Now, Hezbollah can do it of choice. We certainly hope that's the case. As the President said the other day, you can't be an organization and have one foot in politics and one in terror. You got to make a choice, and we hope they make the political choice.

Q: And could I ask you on Iraq?

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: Does -- the military commanders that the President is meeting with, are these the same military commanders that he's going to listen to for recommendations on troop strength? That level?

MR. SNOW: Yes, it includes General Casey and General Abizaid.

Q: So do you expect any kind of recommendation -- the President to hear recommendations from Casey and Abizaid about where to go in troop levels?

MR. SNOW: I suspect it would come up, but I don't know. I'm not sitting in on the room. It's a highly restricted meeting for obvious reasons. But the President does take advice from them, and when you're getting a comprehensive review, one of the questions that's going to come up is, what do we need? The President has always said that that's the first question he asks his commanders, and I suspect it will arise today.

Q: There seems to be a subtle change in tone. When this conflict between Hezbollah and Israel first erupted, the President was forceful in saying, we must address the root cause. And here you're sort of saying, hopefully Lebanon will deal with disarming Hezbollah. There seems to be a backing off.

MR. SNOW: No, no, and I'm glad you asked, because, no, I don't want to give the impression that there's backing off. You've got to address the root cause. And let's walk through that a little bit. You've got to remember how this all began. Hezbollah declared war on Israel, in effect; it fired rockets, it crossed over a border, it kidnapped soldiers. That's an act of war. Israel responded, in terms of its self-defense.

Now what's going to happen, I think, is it will -- Hezbollah will be forced into making a choice, because I think people in Lebanon kind of get it. I mean, they understand that many of those areas have been laid to waste because Hezbollah committed an act of war. They understand that Hezbollah -- I'm sorry, I'll let you -- you can interrupt when I'm done with this. But they understand the deep cynicism of Hezbollah, which didn't do this as an act of liberation for the people or Lebanon; it wasn't designed in any way, shape, or form to improve the life of the Lebanese people. And terrorist organizations look upon human life as something that's dispensable, that's disposable. And as a matter of fact, from time to time, they will actually create this sort of photographic carnival of the carnage by going out and inviting people in and staging scenes.

This is not the way in which you enhance the dignity of people who have been victimized. And we are deeply conscious of the terrible human cost that has already been wrought.

Q: But many people on the ground in Lebanon do not view Hezbollah in those terms.

MR. SNOW: You know, a lot of people do. I mean, I don't know which people on the ground. Again, it's very difficult to assess. The conventional wisdom is that Hezbollah is suddenly popular. I don't think -- you can think about people's self-interest. You have a group that you know has been going in and operating independently in a rogue fashion. It declares war on a neighbor. There is a response. This group says, we are going to continue to do it. Now, if you're a victim of that, you had no party in that, you are not likely to be very happy about it. If you understand that what is going on is that people are being held hostage for political or ideological reasons to a group that is beholden not to the people of Lebanon, but to the governments of Iran and Syria, sooner or later they're going to say to themselves, this is not a good deal for me. And so that's part of it.

Also, it's important to understand that in all of this, Hezbollah does have a choice to make. I know that one of the new tactics, and we're seeing this with Hamas, we've seen it with Hezbollah, we've seen it with al Qaeda now, this is an emerging tactic, which is, commit acts of terror, try to get people to fight against each other, and set up a charitable foundation to hand out cash and crumbs to the victims. While that may be an attempt to make some sort of PR advantage, but in the long run we would hope that Hezbollah and all parties would, in fact, work toward having a sovereign government whose decisions would be respected and whose autonomy and authority would be respected by Hezbollah and all parties.

So this -- you have to address the root cause, which is that Hezbollah, operating independently, decided it could declare an act of war. It did so in complete independence and defiance -- well, I don't know that the government was informed, so you can't be defiant, but completely independently of the government of Lebanon -- and as a result, has, in fact, caused great carnage and damage to the country.

Let me also say that the United States not only has been deeply aware and conscious of this, today the United States helped open up a corridor not only humanitarian, but also in terms of commercial traffic between the Rafiq Hariri International Airport in Beirut and also the airport in Amman, Jordan -- that with the help of the Jordanian and the Israeli governments, we've been working to open up humanitarian corridors, and we consider it absolutely essential to ramp up humanitarian and reconstruction aid within Lebanon.

I know it's a long answer, but there are a lot of facets to the question.

Bill.

Q: It seems, though, that when you come out here and make a preemptive statement that there is no agreement not to disarm Hezbollah that you're flying in the face of the evidence on the ground. You know, for example, that politics in the Middle East is deliberately ambiguous much of the time. There is no indication that, in fact, the Lebanese government is going to force Hezbollah to give up its arms. Your preemptive statement this morning seems based on the belief that they should, and that the interests of

the people will force it. But there's nothing on the ground and nothing in past history to suggest that that would ever be the case.

MR. SNOW: Well, there are a couple of things on the ground. You have the movement of 15,000 troops into the region.

Q: So?

MR. SNOW: Well, that's something. Now, perhaps you've been talking to people directly on the ground there, and have a better read out. But we're now talking about an agreement that is several days old. And if you're expecting, Bill, for there to be dramatic new things and people sort of running out to the village square and dropping off their Kalashnikovs, we're not quite there yet.

Q: No, but this just strikes me as -- someone once said in a far different context that the triumph of "hope over experience."

MR. SNOW: Yes. However, that was Winston Churchill talking about second marriages. (Laughter.)

Q: I believe it was Samuel Johnson.

MR. SNOW: Samuel Johnson speaking -- absolutely right, thank you, it was Samuel Johnson. So Dr. Johnson speaking of second marriages. It's a clever quote. (Laughter.) This is great. No, it's always good to get corrected.

Look, there is going to be -- there is not only a considerable amount of hope, but determination. You're absolutely right. Hezbollah is going to play a very important role in determining what happens here, because if the situation doesn't change, you're still going to have the same root cause. You're going to still have the same possibility of unrest in the region, and that's a real concern. And so you have to figure out every possible way -- at this point, every possible and peaceable way to place enough pressure on Hezbollah and also to empower the Lebanese people so it doesn't happen again. But, yes, absolutely, we do hope that it works.

Q: Earlier you said that violence is down 80 percent in one Baghdad neighborhood. John McCain has complained about a whack-a-mole taking place across the -- cross-country -- you've heard of that.

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: It seems like it's whack-a-mole now on the local level because by all accounts Baghdad is -- by most accounts, Baghdad is worse than it's ever been, as far as the security situation. So how is this not whack-a-mole on the local level?

MR. SNOW: Well, let me ask you a question. Is every time that we have a success going to be called whack-a-mole? Because if that's the case -- no, I think what you have now is we had to retool Operation Together Forward. It wasn't producing the desired results. I'm not saying that suddenly everything is sunny and helpful and bright, but I am saying that you do have some successes. And it's quantifiable, and you can call Major General Caldwell or others in Baghdad and they'll give you all the good numbers on this stuff. But there has been progress. But there's a lot to be done.

The fact is, yes, al Qaeda is going to scatter and run, and there's going to be the need to pursue them. Now, in response to that, what have we been doing? We've been training up Iraq forces. We've also been chasing down al Qaeda independently. And so it is not as if it's a static situation where we just have a bunch of people here. We have people who are gathering intelligence throughout the country, both U.S., Iraqi -- all three and coalition forces, and they are responding.

So Senator McCain, I'm sure, will get fully briefed on the latest developments, and I'll let him give his own assessment in the future. There's always the danger that you think that you're chasing around an elusive enemy. And there's no doubt that some guys are going to run and hide and try out something else.



What they have been finding out is that the Iraqi forces which have been standing up are becoming more capable and more combat-ready and more able to address this. The United States, in and of itself, cannot be chasing all over Iraq for each and every piece of insurrection. That is inappropriate.

But what we are doing is we're trying to target resources and operations in such a way as to go after the key sources of terror and secure some of the key places. I think Senator McCain would agree -- in fact, I believe he said as much, you've got to secure Baghdad.

Q: One more briefly, I know you don't do book reviews, but more people are reading now, Fiasco, by Tom Ricks, a well-respected reporter in this town. And he says that mistakes -- civilian mistakes not only fueled the insurgency, but led -- might have even spawned it. With so many people reading it, do you have any reaction?

MR. SNOW: A lot of people are reading Tim Russert's book, too. It's nice that people are reading.

Go ahead, Helen.

Q: After a week of soul-searching -- I mean, not soul-searching -- I mean briefings the President has had, has he done any soul searching in terms of policy towards Iraq? The highest fatalities in July and so forth, so there is an increase in violence. Are any policies changing?

MR. SNOW: Well, I've tried to -- the answer is first without -- I will -- without having cleared this with the President, I think it's safe to say that any President in a time of war does constant soul-searching because he understands the human toll of sending people into harm's way. And any President who has held the office will tell you the same thing. It is a deeply personal and very difficult thing to do.

The other thing the President does is -- he wants realistic assessments of what's going on, and he wants the ability to adjust. It is an absolute fact that, in a time of war, you're going to try things that don't work. And what you have to do is to figure out how to define the proper formulation of things that are going to work.

The President is not going to walk away from Iraq. It is central to winning the war on terror. It is central to sending a message to terrorist organizations. It is central to creating a democracy in the region.

Q: Willing to sacrifice?

MR. SNOW: Well, as they continue to exhume and now put together exhibits in Iraq of the hundreds of thousands who were killed by Saddam Hussein, there is still the hope that was expressed by more than 12.5 million people who went out and voted at some risk to their lives, but they think it's worthwhile.

And if we could do this in a totally bloodless way, that would be great, but terrorists, as I pointed out before, they look at human carnage as a political asset. We look at it the different way. We mourn the loss of lives. We don't look at that as a way of advancing our ideology. We look upon every human life as possessing unique and independent dignity, and we wish that none of them had to be sacrificed, and we hope that we're precisely working toward the day in which you're not going to have to worry about mass graves in Iraq, where you're not going to have to worry about sectarian violence, and that the primary concern is whether their taxes are too high and whether they're getting what they need from their government.

Jennifer -- Jessica. This is a bad day.

Q: If that's the only name you call me, I'll be very happy. The U.S.'s closest ally in its Middle-East policy is Britain. The man who's filling in for Tony Blair while he's on vacation, the Deputy Prime Minister there, may have said in a meeting -- used an expletive to describe the President's work on the Middle East road map, and called him a cowboy in a Stetson hat who's not just doing the job. Any reaction to those comments? And also, more broadly, how concerned is the President that in Britain there is plummeting public support for the U.S. position and Blair's alliance with Bush on Mideast policy?

MR. SNOW: Well, the President talks regularly with Prime Minister Blair, who is the Prime Minister, so I will restrict my comments to Prime Minister Blair. And Prime Minister Blair understands, just as the President does, wars create anxiety. And he understands that that is an unpopular thing. People don't like to be anxious, they don't like to worry about it. On the other hand, we've just come through a week where the British people were reminded, along with the Americans and Pakistanis, that terrorists are simply not going to stand down because there's anxiety. As a matter of fact, they seem to take some encouragement for plummeting popularity, thinking that maybe the United States and the Brits and others are going to let down their guard.

Prime Minister Blair has made it clear: he is going to remain a firm ally to the United States in the war on terror. And both the Prime Minister and the President have taken some hits in the polls, but again, they still see their primary obligation as protecting national security. So the President has been called a lot worse, and I suspect will be. And there will be piquant names sort of hurled his way from time to time, but that's part of the burden of leadership.

Q: Can I follow on Helen's question? Does the President go through any soul-searching when he hears - yes, Tony Blair supports him, but when he hears there's such little public support overseas for his positions -- does that cause soul-searching?

MR. SNOW: Again, you keep asking me these existential questions about whether the President is sort of -- well, he is concerned. But the other thing is there is real -- you can't be a President in a time of war without soul-searching. It's just not possible. But on the other hand, you also cannot be a President in a wartime and not realize that you've got to stay the course.

Let me direct you back again, all the talk about the greatest generation -- in every previous war, there have been times where there have been difficulties and people said, it's not worth the cost. And it's been true in every major engagement in our history. And yet, you've had leaders who understand that the cost is something that you have to bear, and not happily, but in order to achieve your objectives. The President understands that. And the objective here is ultimately to spread freedom and democracy around the globe, but also to go after terrorists.

Terrorists spread across the globe have made it perfectly obvious, it doesn't matter what we do or say. They don't care. And so you have to find a way not merely to go after what they're doing, but also to discourage anybody who would follow them, either through a combination of force, diplomacy, or creation of hope. And those are the things that the United States government continues to do.

So the President thinks about these things every day. Again, this is -- he sees stuff far more horrifying than you and I see, because he gets the briefings every day. And it is impossible to be a President in a time of war without being reminded of the nature of the threat and also the cost of fighting it.

Steve.

Q: You said that alternative democracy in Iraq weren't being considered. Have they been discussed in any shape or form?

MR. SNOW: I'm not aware of that. I mean, I've never heard it, as far as I know -- no.

Q: I wonder how this came up?

MR. SNOW: You'll have to ask the guys who wrote it. I don't know.

Q: But beyond soul-searching, is the President contemplating changes in policy? To follow on what Helen was saying, because you have these 21 retired generals, diplomats and others today sending an open letter to the President saying they do want a dramatic shift in that policy. You said again a moment ago, stay the course. You could still achieve your objectives maybe with a different course. Is he considering a policy change?

MR. SNOW: The President always considers changes of course. I've already talked about what goes on in Baghdad. But --

Q: Such as what? What would be one policy change he's contemplating in Iraq?

MR. SNOW: What they've already done is they've restructured Operation Together Forward. Now, if you -- we're not going to move our forces to the Philippines, halfway across the globe and use that as a "staging area." The United States is going to remain engaged, but also remain engaged in the business of trying to train up Iraqi forces.

You know, you understand in a political year people are going to make political statements, including retired generals, and they're perfectly welcome to. It's an important addition to the public debate. But we're also -- the President is a guy who has got real responsibility here. Now, I've got to tell you, just given to what I said to Jessica -- not Jennifer -- in response to the sort of ongoing cost of promoting freedom around the globe, do you not think a President will do everything in his power to succeed? And the answer is, yes. He's not sitting around saying, boy, I'm stubborn, I'm going to stick with it. That's not the way the President is.

Q: But every time a new policy comes up, whether it's an alternative to democracy, like today, The New York Times, you say he's not considering that. So what change is he considering --

MR. SNOW: Well, wait, an alternative to --

Q: You're saying, in general, he's always considering changes. And we ask for a specific one, you don't have one.

MR. SNOW: Well, but you regard a change -- you regard wholesale throwing away of the policy as a change.

Q: I didn't advocate that.

MR. SNOW: Okay, well, tell me what you have in mind for a change. Tell me what's in mind for a change.

Q: I don't know what they are, I'm not the President. I'm saying, what is he considering? What is he -- everything that's thrown up that supposedly he's contemplating -- that's mentioned in The New York Times or anywhere -- you shoot down and say he's not contemplating that. And then in the next breath you say he's always soul-searching, he's always contemplating change.

MR. SNOW: Right, well, number one, people who are apparently in credible battlefield positions are not making the same judgments as retired generals who write group letters. And they may have different facts available to them. But, A, for obvious reasons, I'm not going to tell you about contemplated changes other than in a general fashion, because to do so lays out the road map of our intentions and our goals, and places American lives at risk and the overall mission in jeopardy.

However, for those of us who have seen the President behind the scenes, he doesn't sit around and ask for people to put on rose-colored glasses; he wants to know exactly what's going on and how to get the mission done. I will go back again to the simple matter of duty and also personal interest. You want to make sure that what's you're -- you're making every effort to do it and to do it right. And the President is open to advice and he has tasked his chief military officers to do it and he listens to them. And he's made that point many times.

And many of these options may at some point have been discussed, but the fact that they have been discarded doesn't mean that the President is resistant to change; it means that he didn't think that that was the proper way to change.

Jim.

Q: Well, I think what everyone is reacting to is that there's been a lot of writing from war supporters that there needs to be a change, and clearly this is driven by the violence that we're seeing out of Baghdad, and some of these writings from the biggest supporters of the invasion, they've been advocating an

increase in forces, a major increase in forces -- not from one place to another, but a re-upping. And in this political year, is it politically feasible to increase troops by November -- will the party --

MR. SNOW: If it's the right --

Q: -- and will the President do it, if the generals say, you need a major increase --

MR. SNOW: The President has made it clear, if the generals make the recommendation and they say they need it, they're going to get it. And I don't know how many times I have to say it, but I'll keep reiterating, the political angle really matters less to him than his obligations and solemn responsibilities as Commander-in-Chief. You've got to get that right. I mean, that is his absolute objective. And so, it's simply -- if somebody says, sir, you're going to get a real political bounce if you detail another 30,000 -- if that is not what the generals have asked, that's not what's going to happen. Similarly, if somebody says, you'll get a real political bounce if you pull out 30,000, and that's not what the generals have requested, it's not going to happen.

Q: But to follow up, there is this assessment coming out -- especially supporters now saying we need to up the troop level --

MR. SNOW: I understand --

Q: -- that's how we control Iraq, so what is -- is that a misperception on the part of the people who want --

MR. SNOW: Let me get back to -- I used the phrase yesterday which is -- I said the President has strategic patience. There is a lot of impatience right now because you have violence in Baghdad -- you have the sectarian violence, recently described by General Abizaid as the worst he'd seen. You can understand at a time like that, when you also have ongoing hostilities that recently have ended in the Middle East, when you have comments coming out of Tehran and Damascus, you understand at a time like that that there's going to be some impatience, people want things to be solved quickly; so does the President. But sometimes these things don't happen overnight.

You have to look for the right use of forces, in combination with policies that not only are going to solve the immediate problem, but also address the issues that gave rise to it, so that you don't have to fight this war again, so that you don't have to fight these battles again. That is the chief challenge. That's the way he looks at it.

Peter.

Q: Tony, you mentioned, the obvious ultimate goal of getting mission accomplished. When is that going to happen?

MR. SNOW: You tell me. I mean, again -- as I've also said, you don't do this by a clock. The President has practiced strategic patience. The term "The Long War" has been used. If you can tell me when terrorists are suddenly going to turn their swords into plowshares, we'll settle upon that as the date.

Q: Is this years in Iraq?

MR. SNOW: I mean. I really don't know. I honestly -- I don't think anybody knows.

Q: How do you define when the mission is accomplished?

MR. SNOW: Same way we've always defined it, which is when you have an Iraqi government able to sustain itself, defend itself, and govern itself. That has been the clearly stated objective of the President over and over. That's how you do it. I mean those are the metrics you're going to have to use. We're seeing some -- we now have an Iraq that has begun to govern itself through a government that involves parties from all over the country. We've seen increased ability to defend itself, but we are by no means there. Sustain itself also means that you've addressed the terror and sectarian factions where people are trying to make sure that their government fails.

John.

Q: Back on Lebanon, you mentioned the possibility of a follow-on resolution or joint planning.

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: -- for demilitarization. I guess I'm wondering how imminent that might be, how likely it is that either one of those would come off, and also, who would be involved in the joint planning.

MR. SNOW: Well, at this point, let's first see how -- I'm going to kick the can down the road. Let me just be frank with you because we have to see what's going to be happening right now in this -- we put together the UNIFIL forces, and they started going in through different parts of Lebanon, and I think you have to see how that works to figure out how people make adjustments, if they're necessary or not. So I added those qualifiers just in case they do become necessary, don't know that they will.

Q: The budget deficit: CBO estimate out today says, Yes, it's coming down to \$260 billion this year, but then will jump to \$286 billion next year. And then over the next decade, the total deficit will be \$1.76 trillion, even if the tax cuts aren't made permanent. Aren't things going in the wrong direction with the President?

MR. SNOW: No, I'll tell you --

Q: As he talks to his economic advisors, is he looking at spending cuts or tax increases to close the gap?

MR. SNOW: The answer is the President is working on keeping the economy growing, and the other thing is, go back and take a look at CBO estimates from last year or the year before. Go back to the Clinton years. It's an inexact science, and I'm not going to get into that whole methodology.

The President is confident that we remain on a path to cut the deficit in half by his stated deadline, if not before, and the way you do that is by promoting government growth. The deficit declined in the '90s because we had a booming economy, and as the economy continues to boom, you're going to find revenues coming in and enabling us to close the deficit. The President still believes that.

Q: So is the CBO wrong in projecting that the deficit will increase next year?

MR. SNOW: Who knows? The problem with it, it's like asking if the weatherman is right about next Tuesday. Economic prediction is always inexact. You use this as benchmarks for guiding policy. As you know we do our own estimates, and I'll stick with the OMB estimates. And I will let our number crunching guys, our econometricians go through the methodologies with you. I'm just not competent to do so.

Q: Tony, several pro-life groups have called on the President to withdraw von Eschenbach's nomination to head the FDA. They're concerned about his position on this Plan B abortion -- birth control plan. First of all, does the President stand by the nomination? And secondly, what is the President's view on that Plan B controversy?

MR. SNOW: Honestly, I don't know. I won't fake it. I'll get an answer for you.\*

April.

Q: North Korea. The President of the Republic of Korea visits the White House next month, in part to talk about the six-party talks. Chinese officials are upset over the stalled talks. They feel the United States should be dealing with the issue of long-range ballistic missiles versus the issue of money laundering.

MR. SNOW: In other words, what you're saying is we should not be dealing with money laundering, we should be dealing with long range -- okay, go ahead.

Q: What are the thoughts there? And especially as they're saying that the President, himself, will also have to put his hands in the mix personally when they deal with the issue of money --

MR. SNOW: Look, we appreciate the help the Chinese have given us, and we look forward to more help. They have considerable leverage over what goes on in North Korea, not merely by virtue of being a neighbor, but also of having the most extensive economic and energy ties with the government of North Korea. But our position is pretty clear, you got to do both. And we have already gone after counterfeiting activities on the part of the government of North Korea. But at the same time, the whole point of the six-party talks is to find some way to create a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula.

The two are not exclusive aims, and the United States has not simply been going after one goal, but in fact, we've been trying to figure out ways to reintegrate the North Koreans into -- or to integrate North Korea with the civilized world. And the way we've done that is to say, come to the six-party talks, let's figure out a way to do this. If in fact we move to the nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, then there are a lot of good things that can happen, including all of these things. The Chinese know the point, and we stand by our policy.

Q: But, Tony, if it is, indeed, about this threat, about these long-range ballistic missiles, why not make it about that, instead of dealing with another issue that you could solve the problem?

MR. SNOW: I believe we're confusing issues. What's happened is the North Koreans have walked away because they're doing money laundering to finance global terror. We don't want them to have money to finance global terror. Sorry, period. We don't think it's in our interest to allow them to be selling weapons that could be used to destroy innocent human lives. But the point on the six-party talks has been precisely to deal not merely with long-range weapons, but the ability to put nukes on top of them. And that is of mutual interest to both parties. So you're really talking about two different things.

The North Koreans -- at this point, the North Koreans are trying to stall everything out so they can have the ability to do counterfeiting activities to support terror. As President of the United States, the President simply cannot say, okay, we'll wave that off. Instead, it's important -- and in the six-party talks, our allies have been helpful on this -- to stand together and say to the North Koreans, you got to behave.

Q: Going back to Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott?

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: You said that he gave support to the war in Iraq because they were promised the road map. And if we look at the situation in the Palestinian territories right now, it's not good. It could possibly be argued, could it not, that he has a point, that, in fact -- not so much that where we are is the word that he used, but the situation is not great?

MR. SNOW: Well, Victoria, I think as the President's noted on a number of occasions, we're getting pretty close. It was pretty clear that there were some discussions between the Olmert government and President Abbas moving toward the road map, and all of a sudden what do you get? You get a kidnapping by Hamas. And then it looked like they were getting close to a resolution, and you have a Hezbollah attack. It seems clear that there is a desire on the part of most Palestinians to have a democratic state, and Israel certainly wants to have democratic states side by side.

I'm loath to characterize the situation with an adjective because these are awfully fluid situations, and a lot of times suddenly, in what seemed moments of desperation, amazing things happened. I'm not promising that. I'm not saying it's going to happen, but I do think it's important to realize that again, snap characterizations, or maybe even considered characterizations seem to indicate that we can't walk and chew gum at the same time, and the United States has been fully engaged on all of these issues. And we'll remain so because we do believe that creating an effective Palestinian democracy is absolutely essential to creating democracy in the region and in fighting the larger war on terror. And we remain committed to the road map and have been committed to the road map. And we've been working with our partners in that.

The Quartet remains active in trying to make sure that we have the conditions for peace in the region. Again, you always have the ability of terrorists to try to disrupt things, and they will continue to try to do so.

But we will continue working so that ultimately we're not taking our eye off the goal. We're not going to be deterred by these. We understand that this is kind of skirmish warfare that terrorists are going to try to do to throw people off the tracks. But as long as all the parties are committed to creating the road map and going ahead and pursuing a road to independence and democracy on the part of the Palestinians, I think ultimately we're going to get there.

Q: Just going back to Hezbollah?

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q: Hezbollah are rebuilding south Lebanon, and the people in south Lebanon are very grateful for that. They're receiving apparently what they need, and they seem to be receiving what they need. They also feel, apparently, that Israel and the United States are responsible for what happened to them. Now, even though we are giving money, we're not seen to be giving money. The Saudis are not seen to be giving money. What, in fact, can we do to change that perception, given that perception of us is already negative?

MR. SNOW: Well, a few of us probably ought to spend some time in southern Lebanon talking to people. I mean there are lots of perceptions right now.

The other thing is, we're talking about a peace accord that is less than a week old. Let's see how things shake out. I mean look, we're also going to keep a careful eye on what's going on, but perceived or not perceived, the United States is still committed not only to creating the conditions for peace, but also the conditions for a decent life on behalf of the Lebanese people by supplying humanitarian aid now, reconstruction aid later.

But we're talking about quick impressions at an emotional time, and understandably so. And I think we're all going to have to keep an eye on it. Let's see where it stands in a month or two.

Q: Thank you, Tony. I have two questions for you. During an interview with Mike Wallace on Sunday, the President of Iran seemed to imply that he was willing to engage in direct talks with the United States. Would the President Bush -- would President Bush consider such thoughts --

MR. SNOW: Okay. I'm going to cut you off.

Q: -- at the Foreign Minister's level?

MR. SNOW: The President has already made it clear that the way forward with the Iranians is very simple: Renounce the enrichment and reprocessing-related activities, and we'll talk. That hasn't changed.

Q: Will the President allow officials to arrest an illegal alien while she was taking refuge in a Chicago church?

MR. SNOW: You're getting into sanctuary law, and I'm not prepared to answer it. I'm just unfamiliar with the situation.

Q: Can you tell us a little bit more about why the President wants to meet with his economic team tomorrow?

MR. SNOW: Again, this is an annual deal and so this is part of the annual meetings with advisors. We've seen it -- we've had Defense and State; we've had the counterterrorism, and we'll have the economic meeting. Again, go back and look at something that happens -- but I'll tell you, part of -- one of the reasons you'll want to meet is you've got an economic record where we've had sustained growth, sustained job growth; we're beginning to see wage growth; we're beginning to see some moderation of inflation in the face of really significant energy price increases, of which the President is deeply aware and wants to find ways of addressing.

And so you look at ways to try to make sure that there is continued economic growth at a time where we're getting to a point that economists think are pretty close to full employment. You see every month employment numbers are growing, and we have good employment numbers once again. But on the other hand, it's still important to keep creating opportunities for people that want to enter the job market. What we saw last month were more people who had been on the sidelines going in and looking for jobs. We want to make sure everybody gets off the sidelines and that there are opportunities for everybody, but that's what every President wants to do.

Q: Do you tell us any specific agenda items that will actually be discussed?

MR. SNOW: No, because I haven't actually looked at the agenda yet. I mean, we'll get up there. But you can take a look at the participants, and I think what you're likely to get, at least if it follows what we've had this week, are briefings on where we stand and where we need to go. And you've got the Secretaries of Commerce and Labor, you've got the Treasury Secretary, you've got the HHS Secretary. You've got a lot of people who are going to be able to talk of components that have to do with economic growth.

Again, I don't want to fib and pretend that I've seen the whole thing, but you can sort of connect the dots there.

Q: And just lastly, I assume they'll be talking about some of the legislation on the Hill. Does the President support an increase in the minimum wage?

MR. SNOW: The formulation we have used is he supports an increase in the minimum wage that won't come at the expense of jobs.

Q: Thank you.

END 11:36 A.M. EDT

\*Q: Tony, several pro-life groups have called on the President to withdraw von Eschenbach's nomination to head the FDA. They're concerned about his position on this Plan B abortion -- birth control plan. First of all, does the President stand by the nomination?

A: President Bush continues to strongly support Dr. von Eschenbach's nomination.

Q: And secondly, what is the President's view on that Plan B controversy?

A: It is an FDA decision, and the FDA is working with Barr Labs to ensure it is done in a way that prohibits over the counter distribution to minors and establishes other protections.

(end transcript)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)  
NNNN

\*WPD415 08/17/2006  
Transcript: State Department Spokesman's Daily Briefing  
(Sean McCormack briefs reporters August 17) (6050)

(begin transcript)

Daily Press Briefing Index  
Thursday, August 17, 2006  
12:40 p.m. EDT

Briefer: Sean McCormack, Spokesman



## IRAN

- Comments by Under Secretary Burns/Iranian Response to P5+1 Incentive Package/Consequences of Iranian Refusal to Comply with UN, IAEA and EU3 Efforts/Russian Position
- Iran's Sponsorship of Terrorism in the Middle East
- Crackdown on Individuals Exercising Free Speech
- Exhibit of Cartoons About the Holocaust

## COLOMBIA

- President Uribe's Statement on Paramilitary Leaders

## ISRAEL/LEBANON

- United Nations Conference on a Multinational Force/U.S. will not Contribute Soldiers/U.S. Participation in Planning
- U.S.-French Cooperation on Support for Lebanon/Secretary Rice's Conversation with French FM Douste-Blazy
- Turkey's Support for Arms Embargo in UNSC Resolution 1701
- Russian and French Compliance with UNSC Resolution 1701
- Role of Hezbollah in Rebuilding Effort
- U.S. Assistance to Lebanon, both Monetary and Material/Secretary Announced \$20 Million Addition to \$30 Million Pledge/U.S. Participation in International Donor Conference for Lebanon
- Status of Kidnapped Israeli Soldiers

## CYPRUS

- Cooperation with France and Deployment of an International Force in Lebanon

## EUROPEAN UNION

- Status of Open Skies Agreement Negotiations

## AFGHANISTAN

- Poppy Eradication Activities of U.S. and Afghan Governments

## SUDAN

- Funding for African Union Force in Sudan/Darfur Peace Agreement

## PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY

- Kidnapping of Journalists/U.S. Efforts to Secure Release
- Internal Negotiations over National Unity Government/Efforts by President Abbas

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

### DAILY PRESS BRIEFING

THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2006

(ON THE RECORD UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED)

12:40 p.m. EDT

MR. CASEY: Okay. Good afternoon, everybody. I don't have any statements or announcements for you, so glad to be here with you, but let's go right to your questions.

QUESTION: You're not going to believe this, but it's going to be Iran and about Lebanon. Mr. Burns, this morning, told several of us that the U.S. will move in the UN in early September for sanctions if Iran continues to defy demands that it stop enriching uranium. And I, for one, didn't have the good sense to ask him what kind of sanctions, there being a wide range, some with teeth and some -- mostly a statement of "We don't like what you're doing."

Can you elaborate on what the thinking is, so far as seeking -- is it punitive sanctions, economic, political, travel, whatever?

MR. CASEY: Well, Barry, I don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves here, but as you know, in Resolution 1696, it explicitly provides for a deadline for Iran to respond to the offers. It makes explicit the

demands that have been previously made by the IAEA, by the EU-3, among others, first and foremost that Iran cease all uranium enrichment activity. And that's certainly what we want to see happen.

If, however, Iran doesn't take this last opportunity and doesn't take the opportunity to accept the conditions set by the international community, then they will, as stated in the resolution, face sanctions under Article 41 of Chapter 7. In terms of the specifics of those sanctions, as we've always said, there's a wide range of things out there for people to consider, but the international community is committed to taking steps on this. We certainly, though, want to give the Iranians the chance to take this last opportunity to accept the offer that's on the table to cease all uranium enrichment activity and to agree with the world community that the time's come for them to end their threatening behavior and to come into compliance with their international obligations, which is what we've been asking them to do all along.

QUESTION: Do you link this -- does the Administration link their lack of compliance with the role they've played in backing Hezbollah and all or is it just sort of character?

MR. CASEY: Well, Barry, I think unfortunately, we've got a lot of different issues of concern with the Iranian Government. Their nuclear program is certainly one of them and it's one that's drawn a lot of international attention. Obviously, though, another one that has also gotten attention has been their unhelpful and destabilizing role in the region through their support for terror, for Hezbollah as well as for other organizations that are out there. These are all issues that are of concern to us and of concern to us in the broader issue of our relationship and the world's relationship with Iran. I can't draw any particular linkage between them for you, but obviously, they're both things that we treat seriously and want to see dealt with.

Yeah, let's go down here. David.

QUESTION: The thing that Burns said was that he was confident that -- were Iran to fail to respond by the end of the month, that Russia and China would support the next step to sanctions. But the Russians, the day after the resolution was adopted, insisted that it was not in -- there were no automatic sanctions involved and that there would still be a process of negotiations. How do you see that playing out?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, what the P-5+1 agreed to in the package was a package of both incentives and disincentives and both of which are fairly clear out there. The resolution, which was backed by -- you know, fully in the Security Council, including by Russia, says that in the event that Iran does not respond favorably and does not take up the call of the international community to meet its requirements, including a full suspension of uranium enrichment activity, that the next step will be sanctions. And so I think it's agreed to by the Council, including by the P-5+1, that that would be the next step in the event that Iran fails to comply.

QUESTION: But don't people --

MR. CASEY: Go ahead, Barry.

QUESTION: In that next step, there would be specificity of the kind of sanctions, you suppose?

MR. CASEY: Well, obviously --

QUESTION: Or is there a delay; you say it and then people put their heads together and decide how to implement it?

MR. CASEY: Barry, there's been a lot of discussion on this issue in the P-5+1 as well as with other countries involved, but certainly, we will wait and see the circumstances of where we are, whether Iran responds, how it responds and what the nature of that response is before we get to the position of talking specifically which measures would be taken. And obviously, that is something that will need to be discussed at an appropriate time in the Security Council.

QUESTION: Is it also not correct that it's been pushed down the road? There's been a lot of talk about it, but there's never been any agreement yet about what those sanctions would be if Iran did not comply.

MR. CASEY: Well, what I wouldn't tell you, Charlie, is that on the day that the deadline passes, if Iran has not in fact responded, that someone is going to say, "Here is a previously drafted piece of paper that outlines all the actions that will be taken." Again, we need to see exactly what happens, whether Iran does in fact respond or not, and then we can talk in specific terms about what the next steps are.

Sue.

QUESTION: Could you not provide just a couple of examples of what these may include? I mean, what is the range here?

MR. CASEY: Well, Sue, I think a lot of other people, including Under Secretary Burns, have spoken about some of the possibilities there and I don't want to mislead you and I don't want to add anything more to discussion that's already been --

QUESTION: But this is a shifting issue. It's not static. So your ideas may be changing as to what would be appropriate or inappropriate. Do you think that there should be much more forceful action or stricter action now -- I'm not saying force -- much stronger action because of Iran's role in Lebanon?

MR. CASEY: Well, first and foremost, what we think is that Iran should comply with the terms of the resolution. Remember, the goal here isn't to apply sanctions on Iran. The goal here is to change Iranian behavior. And the change in behavior we want to see is Iranian compliance with this resolution and with previous resolutions by the IAEA Board of Governors, with previous agreements that they've signed with the EU-3 among others. And that is principally our focus and we certainly -- there is still time left for Iran to change its mind, to stop its defiance of the international community and to come into compliance. And we think that's where our focus ought to be for right now.

Let's go back here.

QUESTION: About Colombia, is there any statement related with this issue of President Uribe putting in jail the paramilitary's leader in Colombia?

MR. CASEY: I'm sorry, I didn't -- could you say -- with that -- with what?

QUESTION: Yes. President Uribe ordered to put in jail the paramilitary's leader in Colombia. Is there any statement related to that? Is that going to stop the extradition of those people?

MR. CASEY: You know, I hadn't seen his comments so I really can't give you a direct response to it. Obviously we've been very supportive of the efforts of President Uribe and his government to deal with a variety of paramilitary organizations as well as with some of the terrorist groups, FARC among others, that operate in Colombia. But I just don't have anything specific for you on this.

QUESTION: Can we go to the -- I'm asking too many questions. Somebody else?

MR. CASEY: That's okay. Why don't we --

QUESTION: Are you (inaudible) about the UN?

QUESTION: I was going to go to the UN effort.

MR. CASEY: Well, why don't we -- Barry, keep asking your questions and then we'll get to go around.

QUESTION: Okay, I'll try one here. To go to the UN effort: Nobody has identified, as far as I know, who's volunteering although there's some obvious logical applicants. France is a mystery to a lot of us. One minute they seem to be ready to lead the charge, another minute they're sending advisors and maybe one uniformed officer.

QUESTION: And a cook.

QUESTION: And a cook. (Laughter.) No comment. What is --

MR. CASEY: Just going to let that one slide, Barry.

QUESTION: What is the expectation? France and the United States and Britain were the key players in drafting and promoting the resolution. There was a unique -- I think unique -- comity between France and the United States. Is France -- but the United States isn't sending people into the force. Is France going to play what kind of role in this Lebanon force?

MR. CASEY: Well, Barry, I can't guarantee that I'll solve your or my greater mysteries of France or any other country today, but I do hope that the meeting that's taking place at the UN this afternoon -- I believe it's starting at about three -- will help answer some of the questions that are remaining about both who will be contributing as well as some of the more details of how the force will be structured for Lebanon. And it's really important that we do get this force moved forward. As you said, we aren't going to be contributing boots on the ground to this force.

We do, however, have Assistant Secretary John Hillen from Political-Military Affairs who has a great deal of experience in planning and organizing on peacekeeping operations, as well as another group of officials from his bureau who are in New York today to participate in events up there. And certainly we have talked about the possibility of the U.S. providing logistical or other kinds of support to the force as it's stood up. In terms of specific contributions, again, from the French or from any of the other countries that have talked about the possibility of participating in this, this is something we're going to look to get some greater clarity on today.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Have you heard directly from the French that they're considering a much reduced?

MR. CASEY: As far as I know, the French along with everyone else in the Security Council still shares the objectives laid out in 1701, which is that we're going to have a strong and robust force, one that's capable of fulfilling the mission that's laid out for it. And I certainly haven't -- I'm not aware of any comments we've had from the French or from anyone else that they want to change what's in that resolution or change the nature of the force or, you know, reduce it in any way, shape or form.

Libby.

QUESTION: Is there a lot of pushing behind the scenes from U.S. officials and others trying to get them to be the lead here? Do they really need to be pushed towards this or is it something that --

MR. CASEY: Look, I think -- first of all, and Barry mentioned this before, a lot of the progress that has been -- the international community has been able to help Lebanon make over the last couple of years, has occurred because there has been a convergence of views not only between the United States and France, but between all the major players on the international scene, including most of Lebanon's neighbors with the notable exceptions of Syria and Iran. So I don't think either the Government of France or anyone else needs to be pushed to support the objectives here and the objectives are pretty clearly getting the Lebanese Government full sovereignty over its country and to do that, we need and to have a strong force. I'm also not going to try and prejudge for you what their contribution or any other country's individual contribution is going to be to this. But the French have very clearly indicated to us that they do, you know, want to see this force be a success and do, as far as I know, intend to play a role in it. Size and scope, that's part of what we'll be talking about today up at the UN.

QUESTION: Is Under Secretary Burns talking to the French today before this meeting to try to say, hey, you know --

MR. CASEY: Well, I know he's been talking to you guys.

QUESTION: Yeah.

MR. CASEY: Or at least for the Defense Writers Group.

QUESTION: With the Secretary out of town, I mean, who's talking to the French from our side besides John Hillen?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, John's up there in New York and is the action person on the ground for this. The Secretary, despite not being here in the building today, did, in fact, have a conversation with French Foreign Minister Douste-Blazy today. That was, again, just to talk about the general situation in Lebanon and the prospects for the force, as well as for how we intend to help, working together, move forward on all the aspects of Resolution 1701.

QUESTION: Did she initiate that conversation?

MR. CASEY: You know, Barry, I don't know who initiated the call. I'm sorry.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. CASEY: Teri.

QUESTION: Turkey is one of the countries that is reported to be volunteering soldiers, but Turkey was also -- is also suspected of being a major transit country for much of the materials that made it to Hezbollah. Are you aware of those charges and does that cause you any concern?

MR. CASEY: Well, I've seen press reports about it. I think the one thing that's clear to us is that the Government of Turkey, like most of the governments in the region, like most of the governments in Europe, are committed to seeing Resolution 1701 succeed. And one of the things that, of course, is part of that is ensuring that no arms are transferred to Lebanon other than to the legitimate armed forces of that country. Certainly, that's an issue that we've talked about not only with Turkey, but with other countries in the region. I fully believe the Turks are committed to seeing that happen and make sure that that resolution is successfully implemented, so --

QUESTION: You've talked with Turkey specifically about not letting any materials transit or are you saying you've only had general conversations with them like you have had with all the other countries?

MR. CASEY: No, my understanding, Teri, is that the issue of potential arms shipments through Turkey and through other countries are things that we have talked about to the -- with the Turkish Government. I understand that they are very concerned about this issue as well and we're fully convinced that they are taking and doing what would be necessary to prevent arms transfers from going through.

QUESTION: Along those same lines, yesterday, Shimon Peres said that they had been surprised to find some of the missiles, long range, laser-guided, short range had come from Russia and China, that -- models they didn't know that Hezbollah had. Are you similarly convinced, as you are with Turkey, that Russia and China are not going to let this embargo be broken, even though they're major suppliers?

MR. CASEY: Look, Teri, I would take it on face value that any country that voted for Resolution 1701 intends to comply with its terms and yeah, I would certainly include the -- two of the Permanent Five members of the Security Council in that regard.

QUESTION: Is there any evidence that there have been any arms shipments from either Iran or Syria since the truce took effect on Monday?

MR. CASEY: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Lambros.

QUESTION: On the same issue on Turkey, the Republic of Cyprus and France agreed for French military forces to use the Cypriot air bases meaning to be deployed in Lebanon in the framework of the UN Peacekeeping Force, for which the U.S. Government is very concerned about the security of the Middle East. Do you have any objection to this agreement between the Republic of Cyprus and France?

MR. CASEY: Well, Mr. Lambros, I'm not familiar with the agreement or the specific terms of it. As you know, we've been very grateful to the Government of Cyprus for the support it gave us, as well as any number of other countries in assisting with the departure of our citizens from Lebanon earlier on in the crisis. Certainly, if, in the context of the discussions in New York today and in the context of deploying forces for UNIFIL, the Government of Cyprus wishes to make a contribution to that effort and that's developed and accepted as part of the plan, then that would be something we would obviously support.

QUESTION: And also, the Armenian National Committee of America yesterday, with an open letter to President Bush, urged your government to block Turkey deploying troops in Lebanon, saying that deployment is contrary to the U.S. national interests and would undermine the peace in the entire area. Any comment on that?

MR. CASEY: Well, sorry to say, I didn't see the letter, but what I can tell you, again, is that we've got a very active set of discussions going on in New York about how to stage and organize the expanded, more robust UNIFIL force. Obviously we are looking for any countries that wish to participate in that force to come to the table and participate in those discussions, and that certainly would include Turkey.

Sue.

QUESTION: Hezbollah seems to be out in full force helping people to recover from this conflict, you know, clearing rubble, et cetera, et cetera. Are you concerned that its credibility within the community will be boosted by all this assistance that they're providing to the local communities? And also it frequently takes the U.S. quite a bit of time to get reconstruction efforts in place because of various procurement rules and other cumbersome bureaucracy. I've just wondered whether -- what your views were on that.

MR. CASEY: Well, look, in terms of what Hezbollah's activities are, I don't think I have any specific comments on it. We have an understanding of what Hezbollah is and does, and I don't think I need to elaborate on that for you.

In terms of U.S. assistance though, you know, we have made -- we made an initial contribution at the beginning of this effort of \$30 million in humanitarian relief. About \$23 million of that is already in effect on the ground. That takes the form of both badly needed medical supplies, cash contributions to the International Committee of the Red Cross. We of course also have been working extensively with the UN, with the ICRC and with others in terms of helping to be able to deploy the aid that is available down to the region. The Secretary of course has noted that we're already adding another \$20 million onto that again for immediate assistance and we expect to be very active participants in the donors conference that's going to be coming up on the 31st as well.

Obviously we want to see everybody in the international community do what they can to meet both the short- and long-term needs of the Lebanese people here, and I believe we had more than \$425 million in aid that's already been pledged, including the U.S. contributions, by the international community to date. But there's a lot more that needs to be done and the United States certainly intends to be a very active player in that. But again, I'd contend the concept that we haven't already been able to put aid in, particularly put aid in directly on the ground in places where it's needed already.

QUESTION: But are you concerned that Hezbollah is moving in and filling the vacuum rather quickly?

MR. CASEY: Well, what we're concerned with is making sure that the Lebanese Government is strengthened as a result of these efforts, that the Lebanese Government is the one that has full and complete responsibility at the end of the implementation of this resolution not only for security inside the country but also for all the kinds of things and services that governments regularly provide. And I think that's our end goal. That's what we're working towards and we fully expect to make that.

QUESTION: And do you think that Gulf States should be doing more to assist?

MR. CASEY: Well, I don't want to try and single out any individual countries. I think we are interested in seeing that everyone in the international community do what they can to be able to support the Lebanese people and support both immediate humanitarian needs as well as longer-term reconstruction efforts.

David.

QUESTION: Just a -- do you have an update on the situation with the two Israeli soldiers who were kidnapped? Livni yesterday in New York said that the absence of their release was already a violation of the UN resolution.

MR. CASEY: Well, again, you know, the resolution makes clear that we want to see an immediate and unconditional release of those soldiers. That hasn't happened yet. We do want to see it occur and it is something that's called for in the resolution. But I don't have any specific updates for you in terms of their status.

Let's go back here.

QUESTION: A question on trade. Can you confirm that talks between the United States and European Union over the Open Skies pacts are now being delayed?

MR. CASEY: Let me see what I can come up with for you on that. Okay, let me see if I can get this right.

First of all, the air transport agreement, or so-called Open Skies agreement, hasn't been delayed and we are committed to concluding the agreement by the end of this year, which is something that the President and his EU counterparts agreed to at the summit this past June.

There have been some press reports about a delay in a Department of Transportation rulemaking. This concerns the eligibility for foreign participation in the ownership or management of U.S. carriers. Basically, as I understand it, the Department of Transportation determined that the original timeline for doing this, which was for early September, wasn't sufficient to be able to address all the concerns that Congress had raised, so I think we are now looking at -- my understanding from them is, and you might want to check with them for details on this -- is that they're now looking at October 12 when the EU Transportation Council meets as an opportunity to have the procedures finalized. So anyway, we'll continue consultations on this but we again do hope to meet the deadline of having this concluded by the end of the year.

Charlie.

QUESTION: Well, do you have anything to say about the State Department's role in the arrest of the suspect in the JonBenet Ramsey case in Thailand?

QUESTION: We're trying to get on air today. (Laughter.)

MR. CASEY: Well, I'm not sure I can really help you with that.

QUESTION: Just doing what --

MR. CASEY: Look, as is always the case, the embassy in Thailand served as a go-between for those officials here in the United States who were working on the case and Thailand officials, but at this point really I'm just going to have to leave it to the district attorney's office and the other folks who are, as I said before I came out there, all amply out there talking about this case. Obviously it's an ongoing legal matter too and leave it to the appropriate people in the criminal justice system to talk about it.

QUESTION: There's been some initial reports about the success of the poppy eradication programs in Afghanistan saying that the production of poppies and opium have almost doubled over the last year. Is the State Department going to reconsider its action and its planning in the eradication?

MR. CASEY: Well, first of all, I think you've heard not only from us but from President Karzai as well that we consider poppy production in Afghanistan to be a major problem. Obviously, it is an issue where, you know, crop measurements from year to year go up or down, you know, depending on a whole series of factors. But the most important thing is that this is a serious problem. It's a problem for the integrity of the Government of Afghanistan. It's a problem that any government faces if they have a huge illicit

economy, something that helps promote violence that can potentially be used as a source of funding for all kinds of criminal activities, including terrorism.

The United States has been working actively with the Government of Afghanistan on a variety of programs designed to help reduce production as well as interdict drugs, as they're trying to be trafficked out of the country. And obviously we're going to continue to work with the Government of Afghanistan on it. Clearly, as the situation evolves, you know, our tactics will evolve as well, but the strategic goals remains the same.

QUESTION: But there's been reports that the fields have doubled in size in many areas. Are they going to double the funding?

MR. CASEY: Well, Kirit, I don't have any statistics or new statistics to offer you beyond what has already been reported both through our national channels as well as through the UN. Obviously, we'll devote the resources we believe are necessary and appropriate to help the Government of Afghanistan deal with the situation there. Certainly, there are others in the international community. The British, in particular, have been a lead player in efforts to deal with poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. But you know, obviously, we've got a plan in place now -- like to try and start getting it implemented in a more serious way, as more funds have been made available in this year's budget and look forward to be able to do so again with the full cooperation of the Government of Afghanistan.

Yeah, Teri.

QUESTION: Change of subject?

MR. CASEY: Sure.

QUESTION: On Sudan, the AU said yesterday that it's running out of money and it will not be able to maintain its forces there. And the government still opposes the international -- UN international force coming in to replace it or to supplement it. Do you have any new information on that?

MR. CASEY: Well, I don't have a lot of new information to provide you, Teri. Of course, we pledged back in July \$116 million in additional support for the African Union forces in Sudan. That's to cover their operating expenses through the end of September which was the initial terms of their mandate. Obviously, we and everyone else will have to look at if that mandate is extended what we might need to do to be able to continue to fund that effort. Again, there are discussions that are going on at the UN and elsewhere on how we take that force and convert it into a stronger UN force that's capable of implementing the Darfur Peace Agreement, but I don't have anything new to offer you in terms of specifics on that.

QUESTION: Once again, if you can't get this -- the government in Khartoum to agree, you basically don't have a UN force going in, even if it exists, right?

MR. CASEY: Well, again, Teri, you know, every time we've come to these junctures, we've ultimately seen the government and the Khartoum do what's in their best interest and we'd be looking for them to do the same in this case, too.

Let's go -- David. Do you want to go over here?

QUESTION: Tom, it was reported this week that the Iranian Government is threatening to put Nobel laureate -- Nobel Peace laureate Shirin Ebadi in prison if she doesn't shut down her -- basically a center for protection of human rights. And this is supposedly taking place in the context of a much more severe attitude by the Iranian Government. I wonder if you had anything on that issue?

MR. CASEY: Well, I don't have anything specific on that, David, and I can't confirm those reports for you. I think, in general, though it's certainly unfortunate but is all too typical of the tactics employed by the Iranian Government that it represses those in civil society or those in the media who choose to speak out against its practices. And certainly we would hope that no action would be taken against her or against



any other individual who is merely trying to exercise their rights to free speech and to exercise their rights to discuss the situation in their country.

QUESTION: Another thing, this week an exhibit opened up in Tehran with at least the tacit approval of the government. You could describe it as lampooning the Holocaust. It's a cartoon contest not directly sponsored by the government, but obviously it couldn't happen without their -- at least acquiescence. Anything on that?

MR. CASEY: Well, I think we spoke to this awhile ago when this "contest" was first proposed. And one of the things noted at the time was that the newspaper that was first proposing it, of course, was basically owned and operated I believe by the mayoralty of Tehran, so hardly a institution that is free from government influence and otherwise. But again, why is this happening? I think that I've seen press reports indicating that some folks in the Iranian Government are claiming this is an exercise in free speech. I think it's hard to say in a government that, as you just pointed out, makes a regular habit of repressing dissent and of prohibiting anyone who disagrees with it from being able to speak out sometimes at the expense of being put in jail or facing other kinds of serious consequences.

That's really hard to believe that this is somehow some spontaneous action on the part of civil society in Iran. And certainly while people do have a right to speak out on a variety of political issues -- and people do and should have a right to speak out -- I think our main concern in Iran is that people be given the opportunity speak out about the situation in their own country, that they be given an opportunity to talk about the problems that they see there, that they not face penalties for being able to do so and that ultimately, they'd be given the opportunity to choose their own government in free and fair elections, all of which we haven't seen there.

QUESTION: Can I get you with one more?

MR. CASEY: Sure.

QUESTION: Over the past couple years there have been a lot of journalists kidnapped in Palestinian areas. This recent one involving Steve Centanni of Fox is going on quite a bit longer than the others, which seem to have been resolved within a couple days. And I wonder could you say specifically what the U.S. Government is doing? Are there indirect contacts with Hamas, for instance, to try to expedite the end of this affair?

MR. CASEY: Well, I think you've heard from Sean on this earlier as well. And unfortunately, I don't have much of an update to offer you over what you've heard the past couple of days. We do continue to be in contact with Prime Minister( Abbas's office, though, and other Palestinian officials associated with him and certainly continue to call for the immediate release of him as well as any other people who have been taken hostage. Certainly, it should never come to the situation where someone who's practicing his profession and trying to report on what's happening, whether that's in the territories or elsewhere, should be prohibited from doing so and should face this kind of situation. But we do continue to be in contact with Palestinian officials about this.

QUESTION: Isn't it terrible that something like this could happen without the knowledge of Hamas, for instance, who --

MR. CASEY: Well, you know, David, I really don't want to speculate on that. I think the main thing and the main concern for us is trying to do what we can to see that he gets released and gets back to his job and gets back to his family.

QUESTION: Abbas met this week with the head of the Hamas government and came out talking about progress in terms of an agreement on a national -- what they call a national unity government which would be based on a document that would call for an end to all attacks on Israel and have implicit recognition of Israel by the government. Are you -- is the U.S. kind of tracking this, these talks? Do you agree that it looks like there's something happening? I mean, Abbas also spoke about some kind of a resolution to be presented to the General Assembly next month.

MR. CASEY: Well, look, we obviously have great respect for President Abbas and for the efforts that he has made to move forward on the road to peace, to try and move forward on the roadmap, who certainly, as you've seen throughout the crisis over the last couple of months, has been someone who we have spoken with and looked to for support in helping to bring about peaceful resolutions of the situation. I think though in terms of any arrangements involving the Hamas-led government, you have a pretty clear indication of what we want to see happen, and that's been laid out by the Quartet. And obviously any agreement that would be reached or any future government plan that might be come up with would be viewed in light of the conditions that are set out there.

Mr. Lambros.

QUESTION: On Cyprus. Mr. Casey, it was reported extensively that the president of San Diego State University made an agreement with the Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat to open in the Turkish-occupied area of Cyprus a so-called "Eastern Mediterranean University." Since it's an illegal deal by the state of California against (inaudible), I am wondering if you comment on that due to the point it's a matter of foreign policy.

MR. CASEY: Well, I think it's a matter of university policy, actually, Mr. Lambros, and I'd refer you to the university for that. I don't have any information about that issue.

Thanks, guys.

(The briefing was concluded at 1:13 p.m.)

(end transcript)

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)

NNNN

\$\$\$\$